
Biblical Exposition & Sermons
Matthew
Seen from the Perspective of
the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(IV)
Paul C. Jong



“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’” (Matthew 16:15–16)

The question of who we believe Jesus to be reveals the very core of our faith. Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, yet soon afterward he was rebuked when he tried to prevent Jesus’ suffering. Jesus is not a king who avoids suffering and takes only glory to Himself; He is the Christ who, as the Son of God, came to this earth clothed in the flesh and accomplished our salvation by taking away all the sins of mankind.

By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore all the sins of the world, and He was judged for those sins on the cross and died. Then He rose from the dead and saved all mankind. Do not follow the thoughts of men or false teachings. Know and believe in Jesus rightly, in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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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Matthew
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(IV)

PAUL C. JONG

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

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Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (IV)

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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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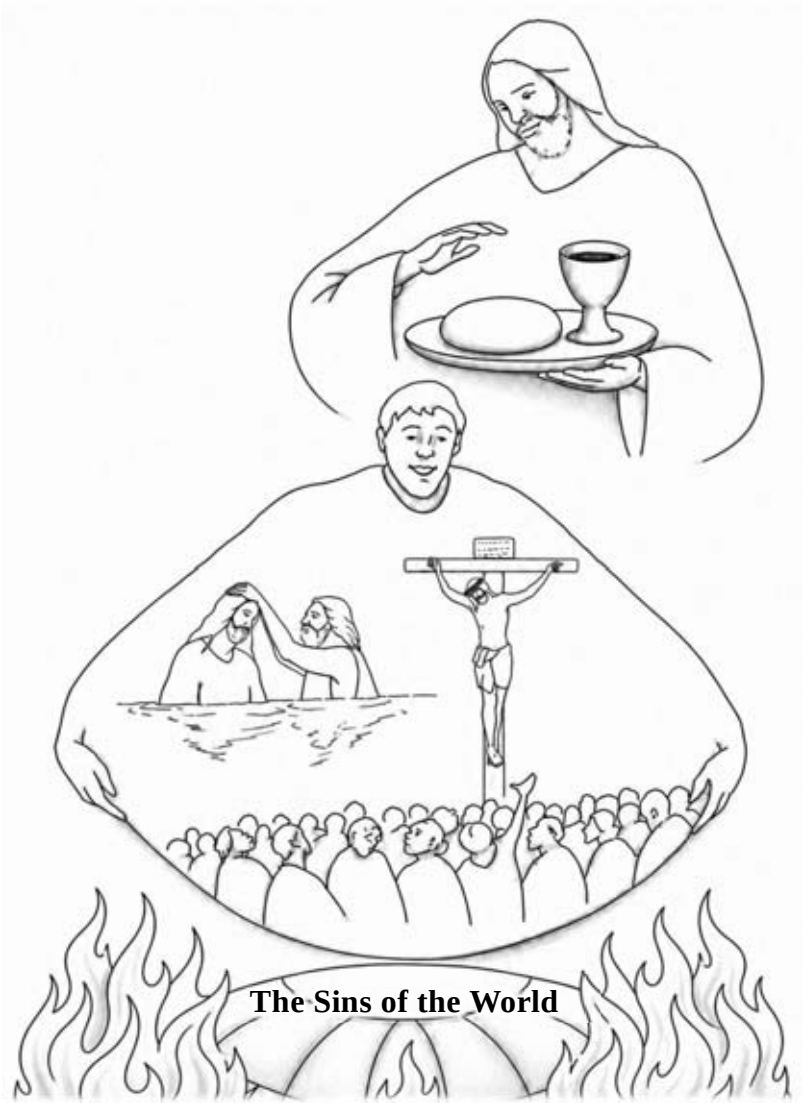

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Preface

Matthew Chapters 14 through 18 proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Savior who gives the bread of life, and that He is God the Creator who rules over the wind and the waves, over sickness and over demons. This Word also teaches the disciples whom they must believe Jesus to be, how the church is built upon that faith, and with what heart a saved person must serve the gospel and his brothers.

This book is the fourth volume in the Bible study series expounding the Gospel of Matthew from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and it covers Matthew Chapters 14 through 18. In these five chapters are recorded the miracle of the five loaves and two fish and the event of His walking on the water, the faith of the woman of Canaan, Peter's confession of faith and the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration, and the parables of the little child, the lost sheep, and the servant who owed ten thousand talents. Although they appear to be separate events, all these events lead in one and the same direction: that a man must lay down his own ability and righteousness, believe the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished, and share that grace with other souls.

A sinner cannot wash away the sin of his heart with the traditions of men or with religious zeal. Jesus, the Son of God, had all the sins of the world passed on to His own body by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross, and He rose from the dead and became our eternal Savior. The one who has received the remission of sin by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly confesses Christ and lives sharing

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the bread of life within the Church of God.

The Word of faith and of the church that Matthew Chapters 14–18 convey

Matthew Chapter 14 records side by side John the Baptist, who was put to death by Herod, and Jesus, who fed the multitude in the deserted place. John the Baptist did not bend the Word out of fear of the power of the king, and he was a faithful servant who finished the mission entrusted to him. Jesus had compassion on the great multitude, and He blessed five loaves and two fish and fed five thousand, and He had His disciples distribute that food. The power of life is with the Lord, and the responsibility of delivering the food of the gospel has been entrusted to the church and to its workers.

After that, Jesus came to the disciples walking on the sea. Peter believed the word of the Lord and got out of the boat and walked on the water, but when he looked at the strong wind he fell into fear and began to sink. Storms come even on the road of obedience. But when we look at the word of the Lord rather than at our circumstances and entrust everything to Him, we walk by faith. Jesus, who immediately took hold of Peter as he sank into the water, is the Savior who does not forsake a weak disciple.

Matthew Chapter 15 exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who put the tradition of the elders before the Word of God. What defiles a man is not unwashed hands or an outward regulation, but the evil thoughts and words and deeds that come out of the heart. Therefore a sinner must not try to adorn himself as clean with a religious form, but must acknowledge the sin of his heart before the Word and believe in the gospel of the water and the

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Spirit, which washes that sin away completely.

The woman of Canaan acknowledged that she had nothing to put forward for herself, and yet she relied to the end on the compassion and the power of Jesus, and by that faith her daughter was healed. Then Jesus healed the sick and fed four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish. The Lord never turns away from one who casts off his own righteousness and asks for grace. His salvation is a grace so abundant that it is more than enough to make alive a sinner of any nation.

In Matthew Chapter 16 Jesus made them beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, that is, of the false teaching that spreads the thoughts of men as though they were the Word of God. And He asked the disciples whom they believed Him to be. Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus the Christ is the King of kings and the true Prophet, and He is the High Priest of heaven who took the sins of mankind upon Himself.

Jesus built the church upon the rock, which is Himself and the confession of faith that rightly believes in Him, and He entrusted to it the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Because this church makes sinners enter the kingdom of heaven by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the power of Hades cannot prevail against it. Yet Peter also was rebuked when he tried, with a human thought, to keep the Lord from His suffering. A disciple must deny his own thought and think first of the things of God, and must take up the cross entrusted to him and follow the Lord.

On the Mount of Transfiguration in Matthew Chapter 17, the glorious substance of Jesus appeared, and Moses and Elijah were seen with Him. If Moses represents the law and the law of sacrifice, Elijah is connected with the mission of John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord and, representing mankind, gave baptism to Jesus. By the baptism that He received from

John, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind, and God the Father told the disciples to hear only the words of His beloved Son.

The event in which the disciples at the foot of the mountain could not heal the demon-possessed child teaches that faith does not lie in counting one's own ability great, but in relying on the Word of God. Even though it looks as small as a mustard seed, the faith that believes in the salvation the Lord accomplished just as it is carries us over what seems impossible. Moreover, Jesus, who paid the temple tax, was free as the Son of God, yet He humbled Himself so as not to make others stumble. The one who has been saved must also know how to restrain his own rights for the benefit of the gospel.

Matthew Chapter 18 teaches the disciples, who wanted to become great in the kingdom of heaven, to humble themselves like a little child. A faith like that of a little child is not believing without any thought; it is the faith that lays down one's own righteousness and merit and receives just as it is the salvation that the Lord accomplished. Such a person does not despise or make stumble even one of the little ones, and he preaches the gospel and cares for young faith with the heart of the Father, who does not want even one lost soul to perish.

Jesus taught that when a brother has sinned, instead of condemning him and casting him away, we are to admonish him in order to gain him, and to set him right according to the word of the church. In the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents, a man is one who has a debt of sin before God that he cannot pay by himself, but the Lord forgave that whole debt. The one who has actually believed this great remission of sin does not live holding on to his brother's faults and small debts, but forgives and is united with him by the compassion that he himself received.

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Through these five chapters the Lord does not separate faith from the life of the church. The one who rightly believes in Jesus Christ discerns the false leaven, holds fast to the Word even in the storm, shares the bread of life with souls, serves young faith, and forgives his brother. Such a life is not a merit for obtaining salvation, but the fruit of faith that appears out of thankfulness for the remission of sin already received freely.

The church and the faith built upon the gospel of the water and the Spirit

To rightly understand the Word of Matthew Chapters 14 through 18, we must not look only at the miracles of Jesus and the actions of the disciples. At the center of all this Word stands Jesus Christ, who saved sinners. The sinless Son of God had all the sins that mankind has committed, from Adam to the last day of the world, passed on to His own body once and for all by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins He was hung on the cross and shed His blood and was judged, and by rising from the dead He overcame the power of sin and death and Satan.

The cross is not the place where the sins of mankind were first passed on to Jesus, but the place where He received the punishment for the sin that He had taken upon Himself at the Jordan River. The testimonies of the water and the blood and the Spirit are joined into one. The one who believes in his heart that Jesus had sin passed on to Him by the baptism He received from John, that He paid the wages of that sin on the cross, and that He completed salvation by rising from the dead, has all his sins remitted and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God.

The church of the Lord is not built upon a building or upon the size of a human organization, but upon the rock of the faith that Jesus is the Christ and that He has completely saved sinners by the water and the Spirit. The keys of the kingdom of heaven do not mean the power of men; they point to the authority of the gospel that leads sinners into the remission of sin. Therefore the church that believes and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not fall even before the falsehood of Satan and the power of Hades.

The one who has had his debt forgiven by believing this gospel does not exalt himself, but relies on the Word like a little child. He also shares with hungry souls the bread of life that he received from the Lord, goes to seek the lost sheep, seeks the work of God before his own thought, and forgives the faults of his brother. When we remember the compassion that Jesus bestowed on us through the baptism He received from John and through the cross and the resurrection, we do not easily give up on other souls, and we can be united with the church and serve the gospel.

The structure of this book and how to read it

This book first looks at the whole flow of each chapter from Matthew Chapter 14 to Chapter 18, and then explains in detail, from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the meaning contained in the verses and the events. It then contains questions and answers by which the reader can check and put in order for himself the Word he has learned, and together with these it carries sermons that help him apply that Word to his actual faith and life.

Dear readers, first read slowly the biblical text of the chapter

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concerned. Then look at the flow of the events and the meaning of salvation through the exposition of the text, check what you have learned with the questions and answers, and then read the sermons and consider how that Word ought to be applied to your own faith and church life.

It is my hope that everyone who reads this book will not stop at knowing Jesus merely as One who performed miracles, but will believe in Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and the Savior who has removed all sins. It is my hope that you will lay down the traditions of men and your own thoughts, receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit into your heart and obtain a perfect remission of sin, and hold fast to the Word in the midst of any storm.

And I hope that after receiving the remission of sin you will humble your heart like a little child, be united with the Church of God, and live as a worker who shares the bread of life with souls that are still under sin and death. I earnestly pray that you will count one lost sheep precious, build up a weak brother, forgive one another by the grace of having had your own debt forgiven, and serve the gospel to the end.

I give all the glory to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and built the church upon the rock of faith. ✉

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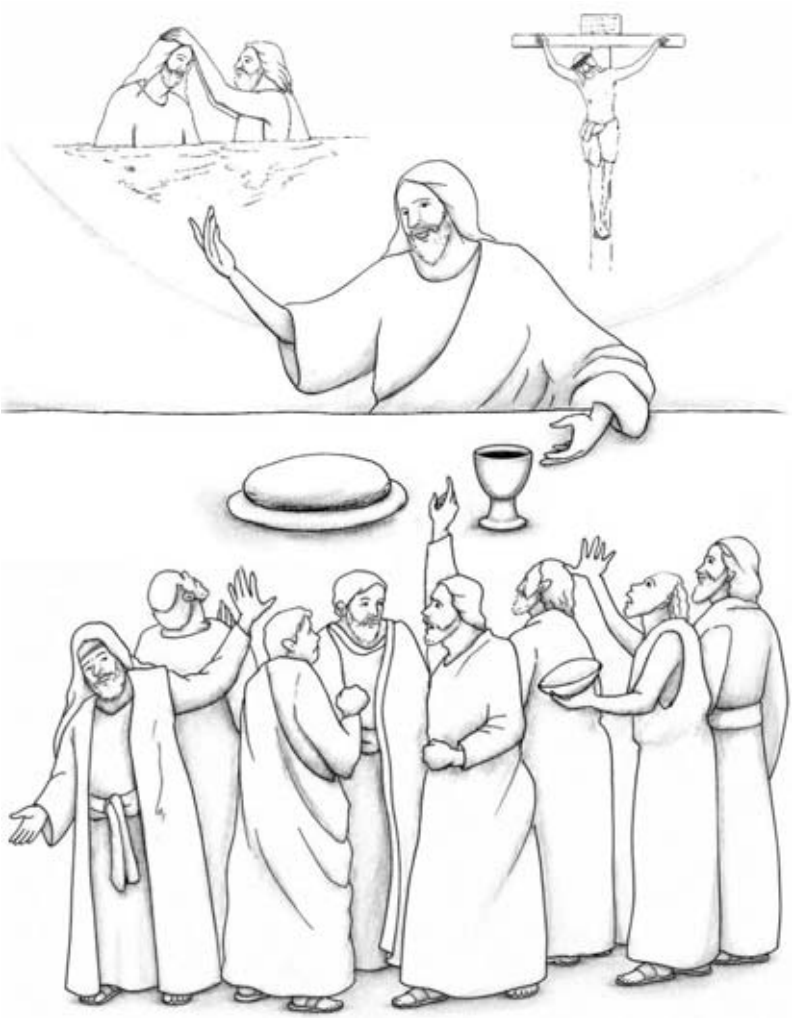

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Matthew Chapter 14

< Matthew 14:1-36 >

“At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, ‘This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.’ For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife. Because John had said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’ And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’ And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and

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buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.' When they had

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crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well."

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 14 records the death of John the Baptist, the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus walking on the sea, Peter's failure and salvation, and the healings at Gennesaret. On the surface these events seem to be simply strung together, but as a whole they contrast the figures of two rulers: Herod and Jesus.

Herod kills a man to protect his own desires and his own face, but Jesus has compassion on the hungry, the sick, and the fearful, feeding them, delivering them, and healing them. In Matthew chapter 14, Jesus appears as the Son of God, who not only rules over nature and disease but also saves those who are in the midst of death and fear.

1. Herod hears the report about Jesus and is afraid (verses 1–2)

Herod the tetrarch heard the report about the mighty works Jesus was doing, and he thought that John the Baptist, whom he had killed, had risen again. This does not mean that Herod came to know Jesus rightly. Gripped by the guilt and fear of having killed John the Baptist, he misinterpreted the power of Jesus.

Herod had killed John the Baptist, but he could not erase John's voice from his conscience. Hiding one's sin and getting

rid of the person who speaks the truth does not make the sin itself disappear. Sin that has not been resolved before God remains as fear in a person's heart.

Herod heard the report about Jesus, but he did not try to believe in Him. Being afraid at the sight of marvelous power is different from believing in Jesus as one's Savior. True faith is not a vague sense of dread; it is knowing who Jesus is and accepting His Word.

2. The death of John the Baptist (verses 3–12)

John the Baptist rebuked Herod, saying that it was not right for him to have taken Herodias, his younger brother Philip's wife. John did not fear the king's power but called sin sin according to God's standard.

Herod wanted to kill John, but he could not carry it out because the people counted him as a prophet. He feared people's reactions more than God. Then, when the daughter of Herodias danced at his birthday feast and pleased him, Herod rashly swore that he would give her whatever she asked.

Prompted by Herodias, the daughter demanded that the head of John the Baptist be given to her on a platter. Herod was sorry, but because of his oath and the eyes of those who had come to the feast, he commanded that John be killed. Though he knew it was not right, he committed a greater evil in order to save his own face.

Those who, like Herod, are rebuked for their sin and yet try to keep their pride hate the truth, but those who acknowledge their own sin turn back before the Word. Instead of forsaking her sin, Herodias tried to get rid of John, who had pointed it out. Herod, though he knew it was wrong, consented to murder so as not to lose face before the people.

John the Baptist was put to death while faithfully

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proclaiming the Word of God. Those who proclaim the Word of God are not always welcomed in this world. Yet John's ministry was not a failure. He fulfilled his mission of preparing the way of Jesus and leading people to the Lord. John's disciples buried his body and then went to Jesus and told Him what had happened.

3. Jesus feeds the multitude with five loaves and two fish (verses 13–21)

When Jesus heard the news of John the Baptist's death, He departed by boat to a deserted place. But the multitudes followed Him on foot from many towns. When Jesus saw the great multitude that had come out to Him, He did not regard them as a nuisance. Rather, He was moved with compassion for them and healed the sick among them.

When evening came, the disciples said that since the place was deserted and the day was already fading, they should send the multitude away to buy food in the villages. From a practical point of view, it was a reasonable judgment. But Jesus said, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."*

All the disciples had were five loaves and two fish. The disciples saw only the insufficiency of what they had, but Jesus said, *"Bring them here to Me."* The problem was not that the amount was small, but in whose hands it was placed.

Jesus had the multitude sit down on the grass, took the loaves and the fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. Then He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples distributed them to the multitude. Everyone ate and was filled, and the leftover fragments filled twelve baskets. The men alone who ate numbered five thousand, and counting the women and children, the actual number was far greater.

In the event of the five loaves and two fish, the compassion of Jesus and His power of creation appear together. Jesus did not

speak only of people's spiritual needs while ignoring their physical hunger. He healed the sick and fed the hungry. The Lord is the One who has compassion on both the soul and the body of man.

Jesus also made His disciples participate in His work. It was Jesus who multiplied the loaves, but it was the disciples who distributed them to the multitude. The Lord's work is not a work in which man produces life by his own strength. It is the work of sharing with others what one has received from Jesus.

At Herod's birthday feast, a man's head was brought out on a platter, but in the deserted place of Jesus, countless people received and ate the food of life. Herod's feast brought death because of desire and face-saving, while the table Jesus spread revealed compassion and life.

4. Jesus goes up on the mountain alone to pray (verses 22–24)

After the miracle of the five loaves and two fish was over, Jesus made His disciples get into the boat first and go before Him to the other side. After sending the multitude away Himself, Jesus went up on the mountain alone to pray.

Even after performing the amazing miracle of feeding so many people, Jesus did not linger in the people's applause. He went alone before God the Father and prayed. Jesus' powerful ministry and His prayer were never separated from each other.

Meanwhile, the boat the disciples had boarded was far away from land, suffering because of the contrary wind and the waves. The disciples met the storm even though they had boarded the boat in obedience to Jesus' word. Obeying the Lord's word does not mean that every hardship disappears. Even on the path of following the Lord's will, the wind can blow against us.

What matters is not whether there is a storm, but who the

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Lord is in the midst of the storm and how He comes to His disciples.

5. Jesus comes walking on the sea (verses 25–27)

In the fourth watch of the night, that is, when dawn was near, Jesus came to His disciples walking on the sea. When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water, they thought He was a ghost and cried out in fear.

Jesus came to His disciples at the moment of their greatest suffering and fear, but they did not recognize the Lord. Sometimes, when a person is gripped by fear, he can mistake even the Lord who comes to help him for yet another danger.

Jesus immediately said, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."* Before making the wind stop, the Lord first dealt with His disciples' fear through His presence and His word. The ground of true peace for the disciples was not that the storm vanished at once, but the fact that Jesus was with them.

Jesus, who walked on the sea, is the One who has God's authority to rule over nature. Jesus is not merely a great teacher or a prophet who works miracles. He is the Son of God, who governs the sea and the wind.

6. Peter walks on the water and begins to sink (verses 28–31)

Peter said to Jesus, *"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."* When Jesus said, *"Come,"* Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus.

Peter was able to walk on the water not because his own ability was special. It was because he relied on Jesus' word. But when Peter saw the fierce wind, he was afraid and began to sink. He immediately cried out, *"Lord, save me!"*

Jesus did not wait until Peter had sunk completely. He

immediately stretched out His hand, caught him, and said, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

The center of this event does not lie in the fact that Peter walked on the water for a moment. It lies in the fact that Jesus caught and saved Peter as he was sinking with wavering faith. Peter's faith was imperfect, but Jesus' hand was sure.

Faith is not the courage to attempt dangerous things without question. It is coming to the Lord in reliance on the word the Lord has spoken. Moreover, even a believer can look at his circumstances and become afraid and shaken. At such times, rather than trying to hold out in our own strength, we must ask the Lord for help, saying, *"Lord, save me!"*

7. The disciples confess Jesus as the Son of God (verses 32–33)

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind ceased. Those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God."*

The climax of the miracle of the five loaves and two fish and of the walking on the sea is not the miracles themselves but the disciples' coming to realize who Jesus is. Jesus is not simply someone who multiplies bread or gives help in times of trouble. He is the Son of God, who is to be worshiped.

The storm distressed the disciples, yet through that storm the disciples came to know more clearly who Jesus is. Not every hardship automatically makes faith grow, but when we meet the Lord in the midst of hardship and experience His word and power, faith can advance to a clearer confession.

8. Jesus heals the sick at Gennesaret (verses 34–36)

When Jesus and His disciples arrived at the land of Gennesaret, the people of that place recognized Jesus. They sent

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word into all the surrounding region and brought all the sick to Jesus. The people begged that the sick might only touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touched it were healed.

What matters in this scene is not that Jesus' garment itself had magical power. The sick came to Jesus with faith that He had the authority to heal, and Jesus healed them.

After recognizing Jesus, the people of Gennesaret did not go to Him by themselves only; they also told the people around them and brought the sick. Whoever comes to know Jesus rightly must also bring other suffering people to the Lord.

The core meaning of Matthew Chapter 14

In Matthew chapter 14, human authority and the authority of Jesus stand in sharp contrast. Herod was a king, yet he was dragged about by his own desires and by people's eyes, and he could not escape from guilt and fear. Jesus, on the other hand, fed the multitude in the deserted place, walked on the stormy sea, caught sinking Peter, and healed the sick.

What the disciples had was insufficient, they were helpless before the storm, and their faith was easily shaken. But Jesus did not stop at rebuking their lack. He put the bread into their hands and had them feed the multitude, He came to them in the midst of the storm, and He immediately caught Peter when he was sinking in the water.

Therefore the center of this chapter is not how strong a faith man can produce. It lies in knowing who Jesus is—the One who has compassion on the lacking and feeds them, who comes to them in the midst of fear, and who stretches out His hand and delivers them when they are sinking.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 14 is the chapter that shows that, unlike the killing power of Herod, who was bound by sin and his own face, Jesus is the Son of God, who

feeds the hungry, delivers His disciples in the storm, and heals the sick.

2) Matthew Chapter 14 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapter 14 begins with the death of John the Baptist and continues with the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus walking on the sea, the rescue of Peter, and the healings at Gennesaret. The center of this chapter is the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, who saves people not only from hunger, storms, and disease but also from the power of sin and death.

First, there is a point we must distinguish when interpreting this passage. Matthew chapter 14 does not directly explain the baptism and the cross of Jesus over again. Nor should the bread of the five loaves or the water of the Sea of Galilee be interpreted directly as the baptism of Jesus. Yet when we see the mission of John the Baptist and the disciples' confession, *"Truly You are the Son of God,"* which appear in this chapter, in the flow of the whole Gospel of Matthew, they are deeply connected with the salvation Jesus accomplished through the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel that Jesus, the Son of God, came in the flesh of man; that He received all the sins of mankind onto His own body when He was baptized by John; that bearing those sins, He shed His blood and was judged on the cross; and that He rose again from the dead and thus completed the salvation of sinners. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and that this work of salvation is the righteousness of God.

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1. Herod's fear shows that guilt and the faith that receives salvation are different (verses 1–2)

Herod heard the report about Jesus and thought that John the Baptist, whom he had killed, had come back to life. He heard of Jesus' power, but he could not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. He was only seized with guilt and afraid.

When there is sin in a person's heart, he cannot meet God as the Savior of love but only fears Him as the Judge. Herod killed John the Baptist, but he could not solve his own sin. He could kill the man who spoke the truth, but he could not remove the sin that remained in his own heart.

Today as well, people fear because of their sins and try to gain peace of mind in all sorts of ways. They repeat prayers of repentance and good deeds and confess their sins with tears, but that cannot completely remove the sins written on their hearts. Acknowledging one's sin and receiving the remission of sin are two different things.

The ground on which our sins disappear does not lie in how much we have wept and repented. It lies in the fact that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and that He received the judgment of those sins in our place on the cross. When we believe this Word in our hearts, not guilt but the peace of the remission of sin comes upon us.

Herod feared the truth, but he did not believe. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a word to be dreaded and avoided; it is the word of life that we must accept into our hearts and so receive the remission of sin.

2. John the Baptist fulfilled the mission of rebuking sin and leading people to Jesus (verses 3–5)

John the Baptist said to Herod, *"It is not lawful for you to*

have her." He did not fear the king's power but declared sin to be sin according to the Word of God.

The Law plays the role of revealing sin. The fact that Herod was a king could not make his sin righteous. Before God, a king is a sinner, and the common people are sinners as well. Everyone must acknowledge his own sin before the Word of God.

But the mission of John the Baptist did not end with rebuking people's sins. In the flow of the whole Gospel of Matthew, John is the one who prepared the way of Jesus and the servant of God who baptized Jesus. He was used by God so that Jesus would take the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John.

Jesus' receiving baptism in the Jordan River was not to wash away His own sins. Jesus is the Son of God, who has no sin. The sinless One received baptism from John in order to receive the sins of sinners onto His own body and bear them. Just as in the Old Testament a sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins onto it, so Jesus took on all the sins of the world through His baptism.

Therefore, the ministry of John the Baptist had two directions. He made it clear that people had sin, and at the same time he revealed Jesus, who would take those sins upon Himself. To point out sin without proclaiming the way of salvation leaves people in condemnation. Conversely, to speak only of salvation without making clear what sin is keeps people from knowing why they need the salvation of Jesus.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit clearly reveals people's sins, and at the same time it also proclaims the fact that those sins have been completely resolved through the baptism and the cross of Jesus.

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3. Herod and Herodias tried to remove the truth instead of forsaking their sins (verses 6–11)

At the feast, Herod swore to the daughter of Herodias that he would give her whatever she asked. When she demanded the head of John the Baptist, Herod was sorry. He knew that killing John was not right, but because of his own oath and his face before those who sat with him, he commanded that John be put to death.

Herod did not sin merely because he did not know the truth. Even though he knew what was right, he counted the desires of the flesh and the eyes of the people as more important. Herodias, too, when she was rebuked for her sin, did not turn back but tried to get rid of the one who had pointed it out.

Man's own righteousness is just like this. When the Word of God reveals that one's faith is wrong, people try to reject the Word rather than turn from their own thoughts. Even those who accept the cross of Jesus may become uncomfortable when they hear why He was baptized. They may also push away the words of the Scriptures simply because they differ from the doctrines they have long believed.

But rejecting the truth does not make the truth disappear. John the Baptist's head could be cut off, but the righteousness of God—that Jesus took on the sins of the world through His baptism—could not be removed. However human traditions may change, the salvation the Lord has accomplished does not change.

The death of John the Baptist does not mean that his mission failed. He prepared the way of Jesus, baptized Jesus, and testified of the Lord as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* The world killed God's servant, but the truth of salvation he testified to remained alive and continued to be proclaimed.

4. Jesus is the Savior who has compassion on those under sin and death (verses 12–14)

John's disciples buried his body and then told Jesus what had happened. John the Baptist's earthly ministry had ended, but the work of salvation he had prepared continued in Jesus. Faith must not remain with God's servant; it must go on to Jesus, to whom that servant pointed.

When Jesus heard the news of John's death, He went to a deserted place by Himself. But when a great multitude followed Him, He did not turn them away; He was moved with compassion for them. And He healed the sick among them.

The compassion of Jesus is not a mere feeling. It is the compassion of the One who gave His own body to save human beings who were sick and dying because of sin. Because the Lord had compassion on sinners, He came to this earth in the flesh of man. And by receiving baptism from John, He received our sins passed on to Him without leaving out even a single one, and He paid all the wages of those sins on the cross.

Man has no ability to solve the problem of his own sin. But the Lord did not come to condemn sinners and cast them away; He came to save them. The heart of Jesus, who had compassion on the multitude in the deserted place, is the heart of God toward everyone wandering in the wilderness of sin and death.

5. The five loaves and two fish show Jesus, who abundantly gives the food of life (verses 15–21)

The disciples said that since the day was fading and there was nothing to eat, they should send the multitude away. But Jesus said, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."* All the disciples had were five loaves and two fish.

The five loaves represent the grace of God, and the fish

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represent the church to which God has entrusted the gospel. That Jesus broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples distributed them to the multitude, shows how the gospel of the water and the Spirit is delivered to the whole world through the Church of God. That everyone ate their fill from the few loaves and fish and there was still some left over shows that the grace of salvation God has given lacks nothing even after giving life to every soul in the world.

The soul of man cannot be filled by the money, knowledge, and honor of this world. Unless the problem of sin is resolved, fear and emptiness remain in the heart no matter how much one possesses. The food that truly gives life to the soul is the word of salvation that Jesus has accomplished.

That word of life is the gospel: the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and came in the flesh of man, the fact that He received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the fact that He bore those sins and died on the cross shedding His blood, and the fact that He rose again from the dead and became our eternal Savior. When we believe this Word, the heart starved by sin is filled with the remission of sin and eternal life.

Jesus said to the disciples, *"Bring them here to Me."* While it was in the disciples' hands, it was far from enough, but when it was offered into the Lord's hands, it became food that fed a great multitude. We have no power to wash away anyone's sins. But when we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we have received from the Lord, God gives life to souls through that Word.

The disciples were not the ones who produced the food. They distributed to the multitude the bread they had received from Jesus. Those who preach the gospel are likewise not people who invent a new salvation with their own wisdom. They are people

who receive the gospel Jesus has already completed through the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection, and share it just as it is.

Everyone ate their fill, and yet twelve baskets were left over. The Lord's salvation is not lacking. Jesus did not take upon Himself only a part of our sins; He took on all our sins of the past, the present, and the future. The merit of the baptism He received from John and of the cross is more than enough to save every sinner in the world.

6. Jesus who prays is true God and true man (verses 22–24)

After sending the multitude away, Jesus went up on the mountain alone and prayed. After performing the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, He did not seek to enjoy the people's cheers but went before God the Father.

Jesus is fundamentally God, but at the same time He is true man, who came in the flesh of man. As a man, He prayed to God the Father and carried out the work of salvation. In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, these two natures of Jesus are very important.

If Jesus had not been man, He could not have taken our sins upon His own body and shed His blood and died. Conversely, if He had not been God, He could not have taken on the sins of everyone in the world, risen from death, and become the perfect Savior. Jesus is God, and at the same time He is the Savior who came in the same flesh as ours.

Meanwhile, the disciples, following Jesus' command, were crossing by boat when they met the storm. Obeying the Lord's word does not mean that no wind will blow. Even those who have received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit face hardships and trials in life. Having received the remission of sin does not mean that all the storms

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of life disappear at once; it means that in any storm we belong to Jesus, the Savior.

7. Jesus who walked on the sea is God, who rules over nature, sin, and death (verses 25–27)

In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to His disciples walking on the sea. Here the water of the sea must not be directly identified with the water of Jesus' baptism. The sea in this passage is the actual Sea of Galilee, and the center of the event is the fact that Jesus possesses God's authority to rule over nature.

The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost and were terrified. Then Jesus said, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."* Before stopping the wind, the Lord first made known who He was. The ground on which the disciples could be at peace was not the condition of the wind but the fact that Jesus was with them.

The ground on which a sinner need not fear before God is likewise neither his own feelings nor his good deeds. It is the fact that Jesus has already received our sins passed on to Him through His baptism and has ended the judgment of those sins on the cross. Because the Lord has taken on all our sins, those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have no sin to be condemned for before God.

The circumstances of this world may keep shaking, but the salvation God has accomplished is never shaken. A believer's assurance does not depend on 'whether my faith is strong today' but on 'whether Jesus has completely resolved my sins.'

8. The rescue of Peter shows that salvation depends not on human ability but on the Lord's hand (verses 28–31)

Peter walked on the water relying on Jesus' word, *"Come."*

But when he saw the wind and became afraid, he began to sink. Then Peter cried out, *"Lord, save me!"* and Jesus immediately stretched out His hand and caught him.

More important than the sight of Peter walking on the water is the hand of Jesus, which caught him as he was sinking. Peter's faith wavered, but Jesus' salvation did not waver.

Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also be shaken as they look at their own weakness. Even after receiving the remission of sin, because the flesh is lacking and keeps making mistakes, the thought can arise, 'Have I really been saved?' If at that moment we look at our own deeds, we fall into fear, just as Peter looked at the wind.

But faith is looking not at our own weakness but at what the Lord has accomplished. However lacking I may be, the fact that Jesus received all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John does not change. However much I may waver, the fact that the Lord paid all the wages of those sins on the cross does not disappear. However my feelings may change, the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead does not change.

The assurance of salvation depends not so much on how firmly I am holding on to the Lord as on how surely the Lord has taken hold of me. Jesus did not wait until the faith of sinking Peter became perfect; He immediately stretched out His hand and caught him.

9. The confession *"Truly You are the Son of God"* is the core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (verses 32–33)

When Jesus got into the boat, the wind ceased, and those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God."*

This confession is very important in understanding the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus is not merely a great

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human being or a prophet. He is the Son of God, who came in the flesh of man. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is fundamentally God and that He came in the flesh to save sinners.

It is because He is the Son of God that Jesus' baptism could take on the sins of all people. It is because He is the unblemished Lamb of God that His death on the cross could become the judgment of all the sins of the world. It is because He is the Lord of life that Jesus could overcome death and rise again.

Therefore, true faith does not stop at knowing Jesus only as someone who gives help in times of trouble. It is believing in and worshiping Jesus as the Son of God, who took my sins upon Himself through His baptism and saved me through the cross and the resurrection.

10. The healing at Gennesaret shows that Jesus does not turn away those who come to Him (verses 34–36)

The people of Gennesaret recognized Jesus and sent word to the region around them. And they brought the sick to Jesus and begged that they might only touch the hem of His garment. All who touched Jesus were healed.

This event must not be understood to mean that Jesus' garment had magical power. The people came with faith that Jesus had the authority to heal, and Jesus healed them.

The healing of the body is a sign showing that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah. But even when the diseases of the body are cured, people grow old again and finally die. Therefore, the most fundamental salvation Jesus gives is the remission of sin and eternal life.

For a soul sick with sin to come to Jesus is to believe in the righteousness of God that He has accomplished. It is to accept the Word that Jesus received all my sins onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, that He received the

punishment of those sins on the cross, and that He rose again and so made me righteous.

The people of Gennesaret did not come to Jesus by themselves only; they brought the sick to the Lord. Those who have received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must likewise lead the souls suffering because of sin to Jesus. No one can wash away another person's sins, but we can proclaim Jesus, who has removed all sins, and His salvation.

The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 14 conveys

Matthew chapter 14 contrasts the man who could not solve his sin with Jesus, who solves sin completely. Herod had power, yet he lived bound by guilt and by people's eyes. Because he heard the truth and still did not forsake his sin, he could not escape from fear.

Jesus, on the other hand, had compassion on those under sin and death. He fed the hungry, came to His disciples in the storm, caught sinking Peter, and healed the sick. These events reveal that Jesus is the Son of God, who saves sinners.

John the Baptist declared sin to be sin, prepared the way of Jesus, and baptized the Lord. Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and rose again, overcoming sin and death. This is the food of life that gives life to starving souls, and the word of salvation that holds up believers even in fears like the storm.

Therefore, believers must not, like Herod, reject the truth because of their face and their own thoughts even while knowing their sin. Nor should they make their own lack and their wavering feelings the standard of salvation. They must look at

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what the Lord has accomplished through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, and believe that Word in their hearts.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 14 is the chapter that shows that Jesus, of whom John the Baptist testified and whom he baptized, is the Son of God, who took the sins of mankind upon Himself, and that having completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection, He is the Savior who feeds, holds up, and gives life to those who are starving, fearful, and dying because of sin. ✉

Matthew Chapter 14

Jesus has compassion on those under sin and death and fills them with life

Introduction

Matthew chapter 14 begins with the death of John the Baptist. Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and was afraid, thinking that John the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, had come back to life. John had been imprisoned for rebuking Herod, saying that it was not right for him to have taken Herodias, his younger brother's wife; and through the dance of Herodias's daughter and Herod's rash oath, he lost his life. When Herod was rebuked for his sin, there was a pricking in his heart, but instead of forsaking his sin, he chose the path of removing the one who had proclaimed the truth. Having guilt and the faith that receives the remission of sin are entirely different things.

When Jesus heard the news of John the Baptist's death, He departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitude followed Him on foot, He saw them, had compassion on them, and healed the sick among them. When the day grew late and the disciples asked Him to send the multitude away, Jesus blessed five loaves and two fish and fed five thousand people, besides women and children, until they were filled. Jesus, who performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, is the One who not only knows the needs of man's body but also abundantly gives the food of life that gives life to the soul.

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After sending the multitude away, Jesus went up on the mountain alone to pray, and the boat the disciples had boarded was suffering because of the wind and the waves in the middle of the sea. When Jesus came walking on the sea in the fourth watch of the night, the disciples said He was a ghost and were terrified, but Jesus said, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."* Peter walked on the water at the Lord's word, and when he saw the wind, became afraid, and began to sink, he cried out, *"Lord, save me!"* and Jesus immediately stretched out His hand and caught him. Salvation does not depend on man's ability or courage but on the Lord's hand.

When the wind ceased, those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God."* And when they came to the land of Gennesaret, the people brought all who were sick and begged that they might only touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touched it were healed. Jesus is the Savior, who does not turn away those who come to Him but heals them completely.

All these words are fully understood within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. John the Baptist clearly testified that sin was sin and prepared the way of the Lord, and he was the priest who baptized Jesus on behalf of mankind. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him; by dying on the cross shedding His blood while bearing those sins, He received all their judgment; and by rising from death, He overcame the power of sin and death. The faith that looks to the Lord's word even in the storm is the faith that stands firm on this completed gospel.

In Matthew chapter 14, Herod, who could not solve his sin, stands in contrast with Jesus, who has compassion on those under sin and death and gives them life. Now, as we look at the passage in order, we will consider the meaning of the mission

and death of John the Baptist, and the salvation of Jesus, who feeds the hungry multitude, delivers from the storm, and heals the sick.

The death of John the Baptist shows a world that does not fear sin and the mission of the priest who testifies to the righteousness of God to the end

"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.' For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter.' And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus." (Matthew 14:1–12)

When Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus, he thought that Jesus was John the Baptist come back to life. This does not mean that Herod knew Jesus rightly. He thought so because of his fear and guilt over John the Baptist, whom he had

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killed. Even if one hides his sin and removes the person who rebukes it, that sin does not vanish from his heart. Until it is washed away by God's method, sin keeps making a person's conscience afraid.

Herod had taken Herodias, his younger brother Philip's wife. John the Baptist did not fear the king's power but said plainly, *"It is not lawful for you to have her."* Before the Word of God, there is no difference between a king and his people. This is because all people alike are sinners and are under God's judgment. John the Baptist judged sin not by a person's position but by the Word of God.

Yet pointing out sin alone cannot save anyone. The Law reveals what sin is and makes a person realize that he is a sinner deserving destruction, but it cannot remove sin itself. John the Baptist's mission was to point out people's sins so that they would repent, and to lead them to Jesus Christ, who would remove their sins. He was the servant of God who testified of Jesus as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*

John the Baptist plays a very important role in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He was not merely a prophet who cried out for repentance in the wilderness; he was the one who baptized Jesus on behalf of mankind. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received onto His own body all the sins of mankind, from Adam down to the very last person of this world. And as the Lamb of God bearing the sin of the world, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, and rose again in three days, completing our salvation.

In the Old Testament era, a sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass his sins onto it, and then made the offering shed its blood. Also, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest passed the sins of the people of Israel onto the sacrificial offering. What was fulfilled in the New Testament

from this promise of the law of sacrifice is the baptism Jesus received from John. When John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the form of laying his hands on Him, the sins of mankind were passed onto Jesus, and Jesus received the judgment of those sins on the cross.

John the Baptist clearly testified that he himself was not the Savior but that Jesus was the Savior. It is not John's baptism itself that removes people's sins; what saves us is the fact that Jesus received that baptism, took on our sins, and was judged on the cross. Therefore, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a teaching that exalts and worships John the Baptist; it is the gospel that leads us to believe, through his testimony and his office, how Jesus took on all our sins.

Herod knew to some extent that what John the Baptist said was right, but he did not turn from his sin. He feared the people more than God, and he counted his own power and face more important than the truth. Herod's sorrow was not true repentance. True repentance does not stop at feeling pained over a wrong; it is acknowledging one's sin and turning to God's way of salvation.

Because of the oath he had made before the people and his face as king, Herod commanded that John the Baptist be killed. To keep a wrong oath, he committed a greater sin. When a person puts his own face and desires before the Word of God, he cannot stop sinning but goes on to even greater sin. The sin that began with adultery developed into a heart that hated the truth, and it finally led to the sin of murdering God's servant.

Herodias, when she was rebuked by the word that pointed out her sin, did not repent but tried to remove John the Baptist. This is how a heart that has not been born again treats the Word of God. When the Word exposes his sin, a humble person acknowledges his sin and seeks salvation, but a person with a

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hardened heart hates the Word and the one who proclaims it. But killing the witness of the truth does not remove the truth of God.

That John the Baptist was beheaded does not mean that his ministry failed. He completed his mission of preparing the way of Jesus, awakening people to their sins, and baptizing Jesus so that the sins of mankind would be passed onto Him. He also testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God, who had taken on the sin of the world. He counted testifying to the truth God had entrusted to him more precious than preserving his own life.

This passage also teaches the priestly mission to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who have received the remission of sin must not become people who attack and condemn the sins of others. We must wisely make known what sin is by the Word of God, and together with it we must proclaim the way of salvation from that sin. To point out sin without proclaiming the gospel of salvation only drives people into despair. Conversely, to give only comfort without speaking of sin keeps a person from realizing that he needs the Savior.

Those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit must use the Law and the gospel together rightly. Through the Law, a person realizes that evil thoughts, greed, lewdness, and pride come out of his own heart. And he comes to acknowledge that he is a sinner who cannot escape God's judgment. Then we must proclaim the gospel: that Jesus received all those sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid the wages of those sins on the cross. Whoever believes this fact is washed of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

John's disciples took his body, buried it, and went to Jesus and told Him what had happened. Those who are in sorrow and despair must come to the living Jesus. God's servant may die, but Jesus, of whom he testified, lives forever. The faith that

relied on a man can be shaken, but the faith that relies on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus has completed, does not collapse.

Therefore, through this passage we must examine whether we are hiding our sin and trying to save face like Herod, or accepting John the Baptist's testimony and coming to Jesus. The sin of the heart does not disappear by avoiding the one who rebukes it. Sin disappears only when we believe the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, received our sins passed on to Him through His baptism, was judged on the cross, and rose again. To believe and preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the faith that rightly inherits the testimony of John the Baptist.

Jesus had compassion on the multitude in the deserted place and gave them, along with bread for the body, the gospel of life that gives life to the soul

"When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the

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disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 14:13–21)

After Jesus heard that John the Baptist had died, He departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But many people followed Him on foot from many towns. John the Baptist had died in the flesh, but Jesus, the Savior of whom he had testified, was alive. God's servant may depart, but the work of Jesus, who saves sinners, is never interrupted.

When Jesus saw the great multitude, He was moved with compassion for them. Before regarding them as a nuisance or rebuking them as ignorant, the Lord saw the suffering they were going through. He healed the sick, and He also cared for the physical needs of those who had nothing to eat in the deserted place. The compassion of Jesus was not sympathy in words only; it appeared as the power that solved people's actual problems.

But the most serious problem of man is not only the disease or hunger of the body. Man is born with sin in his heart, sins throughout his life, and must finally receive the judgment of sin. The hunger of the body is relieved for a while by eating food, but the problem of the soul's sin and death cannot be solved by the world's wealth or by religious effort. The multitude in the deserted place makes us think of mankind, unable to obtain the food of life in a world parched by sin.

When the day grew late, the disciples said to send the multitude to the villages so that each might buy something to eat. As the disciples saw it, there was no way to get food there, nor did they have the ability to feed so many people. By human judgment, it was a natural conclusion. But the disciples did not fully know who it was that was with them. Jesus is the Creator God, who can supply life even in a place where there is nothing.

Jesus has compassion on those under sin and death and fills them with life

Jesus said, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."* This word did not mean that the disciples should work a miracle by their own strength. It meant that the disciples were to receive the food the Lord had prepared and distribute it to the multitude. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit today have the same mission. We cannot remove people's sins or make a soul be born again, but we can receive the food of salvation Jesus has completed and deliver it to others.

All the disciples had were five loaves and two fish. It was far too little to feed so many people. But Jesus looked at that small amount and said, *"Bring them here to Me."* What is offered into the Lord's hands, however small and insignificant it may look, can be used as a tool that gives life to many people. Souls are saved not because the wisdom or ability of the one who preaches the gospel is great, but because God's saving power is in the gospel that is preached.

Jesus took the loaves and the fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples. The source of the food was Jesus, and the disciples delivered to the multitude what they had received from the Lord. Likewise, a true preacher of the gospel is not a person who makes up his own thoughts or religious doctrines and hands them out. He is a person who receives the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed just as the Word of the Scriptures said, and passes it on just as it is.

Jesus is the true bread of life, who gives life to the souls of sinners. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He received all the sins of mankind onto His own body. And bearing the sin of the world, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin, and He rose again from the dead in three days. Whoever believes in Jesus' baptism, the

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cross, and the resurrection is washed of all his sins and receives eternal life.

That Jesus gave the bread to the disciples and the disciples distributed it to the multitude is the process by which the gospel of the water and the Spirit is spread to the world through God's workers. Those who have received the remission of sin must not eat the food of life alone and be satisfied. We must deliver the salvation Jesus has accomplished to those who are still starving under sin and judgment. The word *"You give them something to eat"* is the mission of preaching the gospel entrusted to those who have been born again.

The multitude all ate and were filled. It was not that some ate a little and others went hungry; all the people there ate enough. This makes us think of the fact that Jesus' salvation is neither incomplete nor insufficient. The Lord did not remove only a few sins and leave the rest for man to solve by himself. He took on at once all the sins of the world—not only the sins of the past and the present but even the sins yet to be committed.

Because Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, the blood He shed on the cross became the blood that fully paid the judgment of sin. Therefore, those who believe this gospel can confess that they have no sin, on the ground not of their own deeds and feelings but of the Word of God. To eat the true food of life is not merely to know Jesus religiously; it is to believe in one's heart the salvation completed through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

Even after everyone had eaten, the leftover fragments filled twelve baskets. The grace of Jesus is not given just barely enough; it overflows abundantly. However many people believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are saved, the grace of God never runs short. This gospel is not food needed by only

one nation or one age; it is the food of eternal life that all the nations and all the generations of the world must eat.

The word that they gathered up the leftover fragments also gives us the lesson that we must not treat lightly the grace the Lord has given. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is more precious than any treasure of this world. Those who have received the remission of sin must keep this gospel firmly in their hearts, and they must not waste in vain the opportunities, possessions, and talents for preaching the gospel. We must use everything we have received from the Lord for the work of giving life to souls.

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish must not be interpreted merely as a promise that whoever believes in Jesus will become materially rich. Jesus cares for our bodies as well, but the greatest blessing this miracle shows is that a sinner meets the Lord of life and has the problem of his soul resolved. Even those who ate the bread for the body grew hungry again and finally died, but the remission of sin and the eternal life received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit never pass away.

Therefore, we must not become discouraged and say, ‘This is all we have,’ like the disciples in the deserted place who looked only at their own ability. However little we have, we must offer it to the Lord and faithfully share the gospel of life the Lord has given us. Just as Jesus fed so many people with the small loaves and fish, He uses lacking people like us to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit to many souls. To receive the food of life from the Lord, to eat our fill of it first, and then to share that food again with other souls—this is the life that lives by faith in the grace of the five loaves and two fish.

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The faith that looks to the Lord's word in the midst of the storm is the faith that stands firm on the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'" (Matthew 14:22–33)

After performing the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus put His disciples in the boat first and sent them to the other side. The disciples did not meet the storm because they had disobeyed the Lord's word. They met the fierce wind while going in obedience to Jesus' command. Suffering and hardship come even to those who follow the Lord's word.

Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not

mean that all the hardships of this world disappear at once. Rather, as we believe and preach the gospel and follow the Lord's will, we may meet people's opposition, the weakness of the flesh, financial problems, and unexpected trials. But such storms are not evidence that we have been forsaken by God. The disciples were in the midst of the storm, yet they were still Jesus' disciples, and the Lord had not forgotten them.

After sending the multitude away, Jesus went up on the mountain alone and prayed. Jesus is fundamentally God, but He came to this earth in the flesh of man to save us. While experiencing human weakness Himself, He obeyed the will of God the Father completely. Jesus' prayer shows His obedience, relying on the Father in order to accomplish the will of God.

As the wind blew against them and the waves rose, the disciples suffered for a long time. Even when they used all their experience and strength, they could not overcome the storm. This is like the fact that man cannot solve the problem of sin and death by his own efforts and religious zeal alone. Just as no amount of rowing could overcome the fierce wind, a sinner cannot completely wash away the sin of his heart no matter how good a life he lives and no matter how many prayers of repentance he repeats.

In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to His disciples walking on the sea. Jesus is not an ordinary human being bound by the laws of nature; He is the Creator God, who rules the wind and the sea. Though He put on the flesh of man, He is fundamentally the Son of God, and He is the Savior who came to this earth to save sinners.

Even when Jesus came near, the disciples did not recognize Him and thought He was a ghost. When a person is seized by fear, he can mistake even the Lord who comes to save him for a being that will harm him. We, too, when we look only at our

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difficult circumstances, easily think that God has forsaken us. But the Lord is not One who comes to make the storm greater; He is the One who comes to save us in the midst of it and to teach us faith.

Jesus said, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."* The ground on which the disciples could be at peace was not that the wind had first calmed down but that Jesus was with them. The waves were still beating, but the Lord's word *"It is I"* was the ground of the faith that overcame fear. True faith trusts the Lord's word more than the circumstances that are seen.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well, the ground of faith is not our feelings or circumstances. Jesus took all our sins upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing the sin of the world, He shed His blood and died on the cross, receiving the judgment of sin, and He rose again from the dead. Because the Lord has already completed this salvation, those who believe can confess according to the Word of God that they are the righteous who have received the remission of sin, regardless of their own lack.

Peter asked Jesus, *"Command me to come to You on the water."* He did not jump out of the boat trusting only his own courage. He first asked for the Lord's command, and when the Lord said, *"Come,"* he got down out of the boat relying on that word. Faith is not doing reckless things according to one's own feelings; it is stepping out in reliance on the word the Lord has spoken.

The power by which Peter could walk on the water did not come from Peter himself. What held him up was Jesus' word, *"Come."* In the same way, the power that makes us, who were in sin, into the righteous does not come from our strong conviction or good deeds. The power to wash away sin and give life to the soul is in the word of salvation itself, which Jesus has

accomplished.

But as Peter was going toward Jesus, he saw the wind and became afraid. When his eyes moved from the Lord's word to the danger around him, he began to sink. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also be shaken in faith if they look only at their fleshly lack and the world's criticism. When the thought arises, 'Am I, who am so lacking, really righteous?' we must not look at ourselves but look again at the salvation the Lord has accomplished.

If Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John, those sins no longer remain in our hearts. If the Lord said on the cross, *"It is finished,"* the judgment of sin has also completely ended. The fact that we are weak and make mistakes cannot nullify the salvation Jesus has completed. Faith is not trusting our own wavering appearance; it is holding on to the unchanging Word of God.

As Peter was sinking, he cried out, *"Lord, save me!"* His prayer was short, but the One from whom he sought help was clear. Jesus did not wait until Peter had sunk completely; He immediately stretched out His hand and caught him. The Lord does not turn away a person who acknowledges his own weakness and asks Him for help.

After catching Peter, Jesus said, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* It was not that Peter had no faith at all. Because he had faith, he got down out of the boat and walked on the water; but because he doubted while looking at his circumstances, he sank. The Lord's rebuke was not condemnation meant to cast Peter away but teaching meant to establish his faith completely.

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat together, the wind ceased. Those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God."* Jesus, who fed the multitude with the five loaves and two fish, walked on the sea,

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and stilled the storm, is not merely a great prophet. He is God, who rules nature, life, and death, and the true Savior, who has saved us from sin.

This passage is not a teaching that if only we have faith, we can perform every miracle we want. The purpose of faith does not lie in exalting ourselves or displaying supernatural powers. Believing that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior who has saved us through the water and the Spirit, and relying on Him in any storm—this is true faith.

Therefore, when those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit meet the storms of life, they must not struggle to solve them by their own strength alone or fall into despair. First, we must look to Jesus, who has saved us from all our sins, and pray. We must believe that the Lord is our Shepherd and that He is alive even now and holding on to us. If we look at the wind and the waves, we fall into fear; but if we look at the Word of the gospel Jesus has completed, we can rise up again by faith.

The faith that recognizes Jesus and comes to Him brings complete salvation from every sickness of sin

"When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well." (Matthew 14:34–36)

Passing through the storm, Jesus and His disciples arrived at the land of Gennesaret. The boat the disciples were in had suffered from the fierce wind, but after Jesus got into the boat, it

arrived safely at its destination. The Lord did not stop at calming the storm; He led the disciples all the way to the other side. The Lord not only saves His people but also leads them to the place of the mission where they are to preach the gospel.

The people of Gennesaret recognized Jesus. They did not merely recognize His outward appearance; they believed the fact that He had the power to heal the sick. Faith begins with knowing who Jesus is. We must know Jesus not merely as a great teacher or a man who works miracles, but as the Son of God and the Savior, who came to save sinners.

After recognizing Jesus, the people of Gennesaret did not keep the news to themselves but spread it throughout the surrounding region. It was because they knew that there were sick people who had to meet Jesus. Those who have truly believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise cannot be satisfied that they alone have received the remission of sin. They must make known the salvation Jesus has accomplished to the souls around them who are still under sin and judgment.

The people of that place did not merely tell the sick where Jesus was; they brought them to Jesus themselves. Those who could not walk by themselves, they must have supported or carried. Whoever preaches the gospel must have the love that leads the spiritually sick to Jesus. Instead of criticizing or keeping away from those who are spiritually sick, we must help them hear the word of salvation and believe in Jesus.

Every human being is born with the sickness of sin, which is more serious than the diseases of the body. Evil thoughts, greed, pride, lewdness, and hatred keep coming out of the heart of man. Man cannot remove this root of sin with his own resolutions and self-discipline. Because whoever dies still carrying the sickness of sin must receive God’s judgment, everyone needs the salvation of Jesus Christ.

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Jesus had compassion on us, who had the sickness of sin, and saved us through the water and the Spirit. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of everyone in the world upon His own body. And bearing those sins, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of all sins, and He rose again in three days. Whoever believes in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection is washed of all his sins and receives eternal life.

The sick begged that they might *"only touch the hem of His garment."* They did not worship an object, thinking that the garment itself had magical power. They came to the Lord with the faith that even touching the hem of His garment would heal them by Jesus' power. What they relied on was not their own devotion or merit but the power and compassion of Jesus.

Accordingly, this word must not be interpreted to mean that objects related to Jesus or the clothes of a person have special power. Today, the act of touching some religious object or receiving the laying on of hands from a particular person does not wash away sin. The power to wash away sin is only in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus has completed. We must not cling to objects but believe in our hearts the Word of salvation Jesus has accomplished.

As many as touched Him were healed. The power of Jesus was not an incomplete power that healed the diseases of some people but could not heal others. Jesus is God, who has power sufficient to save every sinner. In the same way, the gospel of the water and the Spirit has no lack, as if it washed away only light sins and left great sins behind.

The sins Jesus took on through the baptism He received from John include them all: our original sin and personal sins, the sins committed in the heart and the sins committed in deeds, and the sins of the past, the present, and the future. Because He received

the judgment of all those sins on the cross, no sin remains in the heart of the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as all the sick were made perfectly well, so those who believe this gospel receive not a partial remission of sin but a complete remission of sin.

However, this event must not be understood only as a promise that if we believe in Jesus, every disease of the body will surely be healed at once. Jesus has the power to heal the sick, and we can pray for those who are ill. This miracle teaches that Jesus is the Savior, who rules over sin and death. Even when the disease of the body is healed, a person dies someday; but the eternal life received with the remission of sin never disappears.

Just as the people of Gennesaret recognized Jesus and spread the news all around, so those who have been born again must spread the gospel of the water and the Spirit far and wide. Yet this is not dragging people in by force or compelling them; it is helping them with love so that they may realize their own sins and hear the salvation Jesus has accomplished. Salvation is not something the preacher of the gospel gives; it is what God gives to the person who hears the Word of the gospel and believes.

Therefore, we must not rely on our own good deeds, prayers of repentance, and religious zeal, but come to Jesus with faith. Just as the sick of Gennesaret believed in Jesus' power and touched the hem of His garment, we too must hold in our hearts the Word of salvation Jesus completed through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. Whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is completely healed of the sickness of sin and becomes a child of God. And we must preach this gospel of life to other sick souls so that they too may come to Jesus. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 14

[Question] 1. What events are recorded in Matthew chapter 14, and in what order?

Matthew chapter 14 records in order the death of John the Baptist and the various mighty works of Jesus, and it is a chapter that shows Herod, a ruler of this world, in contrast with Jesus, the Lord of life.

This chapter is organized as follows.

Herod's misunderstanding of Jesus (verses 1–2): Herod hears the report about Jesus and thinks that the dead John the Baptist has come back to life.

The imprisonment and death of John the Baptist (verses 3–12): John the Baptist, who rebuked the sin of Herod and Herodias, is beheaded at Herod's birthday feast.

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish (verses 13–21): Jesus has compassion on the multitude and feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish.

Jesus walking on the water (verses 22–33): Jesus comes to His disciples walking on the sea and saves Peter as he sinks into the water. The disciples confess Jesus as the Son of God.

The healing of the sick at Gennesaret (verses 34–36): People bring the sick to Jesus, and all who touch the hem of His garment are healed.

In terms of composition, the first part presents the event of death, in which John the Baptist is killed at Herod's feast, and the part that follows presents the events of life and salvation, in

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which Jesus gives food to the hungry multitude, heals the sick, and saves His disciples.

Accordingly, the compositional feature of Matthew chapter 14 is that it shows the evil power of this world through the martyrdom of John the Baptist, and at the same time reveals that Jesus is the Son of God, who rules over food, nature, and disease.

[Question] 2. In Matthew 14:1, what position does *"the tetrarch"* refer to, and who is this Herod?

The tetrarch Herod in Matthew chapter 14 is Herod Antipas. He was a son of Herod the Great, and under Roman rule he governed the regions of Galilee and Perea as tetrarch. *"The tetrarch"* means a person who rules one part of a divided territory.

In the Scriptures, he appears as the man who took Herodias, his younger brother Philip's wife, and who imprisoned and then killed John the Baptist, who had rebuked him for it. He also showed a superstitious and anxious character, thinking, when he heard the report about Jesus, that John the Baptist had risen from the dead.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 14:2, when Herod heard the report about Jesus, who did he wrongly think Jesus was?

Herod misunderstood Jesus to be the dead John the Baptist come back to life. He thought that the powers Jesus was performing came from John the Baptist, who had risen again.

"And said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he is

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risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.'" (Matthew 14:2)

Herod did not know that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ. Because of the anxiety and fear that came from having killed John the Baptist, when he heard the report about Jesus, he wrongly judged that John the Baptist had come back to life.

[Question] 4. In Matthew 14:3, 4, why did Herod arrest John the Baptist and put him in prison?

John the Baptist was imprisoned because he rebuked Herod for taking Herodias, the wife of his younger brother Philip, telling him that it was not right for him to have her.

"For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.'" (Matthew 14:3–4)

John the Baptist did not fear Herod's power but clearly rebuked his wrong. Herod did not repent when he heard those words; rather, he seized John, bound him, and put him in prison.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 14:5, what attitude did Herod take before John, who rebuked his sin?

Herod did not repent of his wrong; he seized John the Baptist, put him in prison, and sought to kill him. But because the people counted John as a prophet, he feared the multitude and could not kill him right away.

"And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet." (Matthew 14:5)

[Question] 6. In Matthew 14:6–12, what happened at Herod's birthday feast?

At Herod's birthday feast, the daughter of Herodias danced and pleased Herod. When Herod swore that he would give her whatever she asked, the daughter, at the direction of her mother Herodias, demanded that the head of John the Baptist be given to her on a platter.

Herod was sorry, but because of the oath he had made and those who sat with him, he commanded that John the Baptist be beheaded. John's head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and the girl took it to her mother. John's disciples took his body, buried it, and then told Jesus what had happened.

"And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother." (Matthew 14:9–11)

[Question] 7. In Matthew 14:8–11, judging from her words and actions, what kind of person was Herodias?

Herodias was a person of strong malice and vengefulness, who neither accepted the words of John the Baptist, who had rebuked her sin, nor repented, but instead sought to kill him.

"So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter.' And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on

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a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother." (Matthew 14:8–11)

Herodias, as she appears in this passage, can be described as follows.

A person who neither acknowledged nor repented of her own wrong; a person who hated John the Baptist for speaking the truth; a person who used her daughter to achieve her own purpose; a person who harbored such vengefulness and murderous malice as to demand the head of John the Baptist; a person who put her own desires and face before the word of God

Herodias, therefore, was a stubborn and evil person who, even after being rebuked for her sin, did not turn back but tried to remove the one who had proclaimed the truth.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 14:12, explain the death of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist rebuked Herod the tetrarch, declaring that his taking of Herodias, his younger brother Philip's wife, was a sin contrary to the word of God. At this, Herod seized John, bound him, and put him in prison. Herod wanted to kill John, but because the people regarded him as a prophet, he was afraid and could not carry it out.

At Herod's birthday feast, however, the daughter of Herodias danced and pleased Herod, and Herod swore that he would give her whatever she asked. The daughter, at the direction of her mother Herodias, demanded that the head of John the Baptist be given to her on a platter. Herod was grieved, but because of the oath he had made and to save face before those who sat with him, he had John beheaded in prison. John's head was brought on a platter and handed to the girl, and the girl took it to her mother.

Afterward, John's disciples took his body, buried it, and told Jesus what had happened.

John the Baptist did not bend the word of God; he testified to righteousness to the end and was martyred. He did not say that sin was right, whether before the king's power or to preserve his own life. Therefore, his death must not be seen as the result of a failed life of faith. He was a servant who faithfully carried out the mission God had entrusted to him.

Above all, John the Baptist had already completed his most important mission in the history of salvation before he died. He prepared the way of the Lord, cried out to the people to repent, and, as the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus received all the sins of the world onto His own body, and John the Baptist testified that He was the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Afterward, Jesus bore those sins He had already taken on, was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving all the judgment of sin, and rose from death to become our eternal Savior. Therefore, the death of John the Baptist is not an event in which his mission was thwarted; it is the martyrdom of a servant of God who had completely finished his office of preparing the way of Jesus Christ and testifying to the passing on of sin and to the Savior.

[Question] 9. In Matthew 14:13, where does the Scripture record that Jesus departed to when He heard of the death of John the Baptist?

When Jesus heard the news of John the Baptist's death, He departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But the multitudes heard it and followed Him on foot from the cities.

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"When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities." (Matthew 14:13)

[Question] 10. In Matthew 14:14, how does the Scripture describe the heart of Jesus and what He did when He saw the multitude?

When Jesus saw the great multitude that had come out to Him, He was moved with compassion for them. And He healed the sick among them.

"And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick." (Matthew 14:14)

Although Jesus had gone to a deserted place by Himself, He did not regard the multitude that came to Him as a nuisance or send them away. He saw their sickness and suffering, felt deep compassion for them, and showed His love in deed by healing the sick.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 14:15, about what time can we take the *"evening"* to be, when the disciples said to send the multitude away?

Here *"evening"* refers to the late afternoon when the day begins to decline, that is, the hours before the sun sets. The exact time cannot be fixed, but it can be understood as roughly between three and six in the afternoon. The expression in the original text can refer both to the late afternoon and to around sunset.

"When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.'" (Matthew 14:15)

Since it was still a time when the multitude could go into the nearby villages and buy food, it is natural to see it as the late afternoon when the sun was beginning to set, rather than a completely darkened night.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 14:15, 16, when the day grew late, how did the disciples suggest to Jesus that the situation of the multitude be handled?

When evening came, the disciples asked Jesus to send the multitude away into the villages to buy themselves food, since the place was deserted and the hour was already late.

"When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.'" (Matthew 14:15–16)

[Question] 13. In Matthew 14:16, what answer did Jesus give to the suggestion to send the multitude away?

To the disciples' request to send the multitude away to the villages, Jesus answered that they did not need to go away and that the disciples themselves should give them something to eat.

"But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You

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give them something to eat.'" (Matthew 14:16)

Jesus told the disciples to rely on Him and care for the needs of the multitude, even though what they had was insufficient.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 14:17, how much food was all that the disciples had in their hands at that time?

The only food the disciples had was five loaves and two fish.

"And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.'" (Matthew 14:17)

[Question] 15. Explain the miracle of the five loaves and two fish in Matthew 14:18–20.

When evening came and the great multitude that had been listening to Jesus' word in the deserted place had nothing to eat, the disciples suggested sending the multitude to the villages so that each might buy food. But Jesus told them not to send the multitude away and to give them something to eat themselves. The only food the disciples had was five loaves and two fish.

Jesus told the disciples to bring them to Him. Then, after having the multitude sit down on the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. When Jesus broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, the disciples distributed them to the multitude. As a result, everyone ate and was filled, and the leftover fragments alone filled twelve baskets. Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus, who performed the miracle of the five loaves and two

fish, is not merely a man of power who fed many people; He is the Creator God, who abundantly supplies the food that is needed even in the midst of nothing. Jesus also had compassion on the hungry multitude. The Lord's compassion did not stop at pitying them in His heart; it appeared as action that actually filled what they needed.

The loaves and fish the disciples had were far from enough to feed so many people, but when they were entrusted into Jesus' hands, they became food that fed everyone with some to spare. This teaches that a worker of the gospel must not look only at his own ability and circumstances, but must entrust even the little he has to the Lord and rely on His power. The power comes from Jesus, but Jesus distributed the bread to the multitude through the hands of His disciples.

Applying this from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the food people need most is not only bread for the body but the gospel of life that gives life to the soul. Jesus received all the sins of the world onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist; bearing those sins, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving the punishment of sin; and He rose from death and became our eternal bread of life. Whoever believes in this salvation with his heart receives the remission of all his sins and obtains eternal life.

Just as Jesus gave the bread to the disciples and had them distribute it to the multitude, so today the Lord distributes the gospel of the water and the Spirit to souls starved by sin through the Church of God and the workers of the gospel. The Lord's grace and salvation are abundant enough to give life to all people and still lack nothing. Therefore, those who have received the remission of sin must not keep the food of life they have received from the Lord to themselves but share it with the souls of the whole world.

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[Question] 16. In Matthew 14:21, how does the Scripture state the number of the people who ate the food through the miracle of the five loaves and two fish?

Those who ate were about five thousand men alone, besides women and children.

"Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 14:21)

Including the women and children, the total number of those who actually ate the food would have been far greater than five thousand, but the Scripture does not record the exact total number.

[Question] 17. Organize the food-related miracles recorded in the Scriptures into the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The representative miracles related to food in the Old and New Testaments are as follows.

The Old Testament

• Giving manna and quail in the wilderness

God gave the people of Israel in the wilderness manna and quail to eat. (Exodus 16:4–35)

• Supplying food to Elijah through ravens

Ravens brought Elijah bread and meat in the morning and in the evening. (1 Kings 17:2–6)

• Keeping the flour and oil of the widow of Zarephath from running out

Until the drought ended, the bin of flour was not used up and

the jar of oil did not run dry. (1 Kings 17:8–16)

• Multiplying the widow's oil

Through Elisha, God made a little oil fill many vessels, so that the widow could pay her debt and live on the rest. (2 Kings 4:1–7)

• Making the poisoned stew edible

When Elisha put flour into the pot, the harm in the stew was removed and the people could eat it. (2 Kings 4:38–41)

• Feeding one hundred men with twenty loaves of barley bread

With a small amount of food, one hundred men ate and had some left over. (2 Kings 4:42–44)

The New Testament

• Turning water into wine

Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. (John 2:1–11)

• Feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish

With five loaves and two fish, Jesus fed five thousand men besides women and children, and the leftover fragments were gathered into twelve baskets. (Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:30–44; Luke 9:10–17; John 6:1–14)

• Feeding four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish

With seven loaves and a few little fish, Jesus fed four thousand men besides women and children, and the leftover fragments were gathered into seven large baskets. (Matthew 15:32–39; Mark 8:1–10)

• Granting a great catch of fish

When they let down the net in obedience to Jesus' word, so many fish were caught that the net was breaking. (Luke 5:1–11)

• The risen Jesus granting a catch of 153 fish

The disciples had caught nothing all night, but when they let

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down the net according to Jesus' word, 153 large fish were caught. (John 21:1–14)

The God who performed these miracles is the One who knows people's needs, supplies the food they need, and makes the little abundant. In particular, in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, which surpassed the Old Testament event in which Elisha fed many people with a few loaves of barley bread, Jesus is revealed as the Christ, who gives life and food.

[Question] 18. In Matthew 14:22, 23, what did Jesus do alone after sending the multitude away?

After feeding the multitude, Jesus did the following.

• He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side.

• He Himself, meanwhile, sent the multitude away.

• After sending the multitude away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

• When evening came, He was still there alone on the mountain.

"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there." (Matthew 14:22–23)

Even after performing the great miracle of feeding so many people, Jesus did not seek people's praise but prayed to God by Himself.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 14:24, how far from land was the boat when it met the storm?

When the disciples met the storm, the boat was already in the middle of the sea, far away from land.

"But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary." (Matthew 14:24)

The Scripture does not state the exact distance but records that the boat was *"in the middle of the sea."* This shows that the boat was already so far from the shore that the disciples could not easily return to land. They were suffering in the middle of the lake because of the contrary wind and the waves.

[Question] 20. In Matthew 14:24, 25, how does the Scripture describe the situation the disciples were in, in the middle of the sea?

The boat the disciples had boarded was already in the middle of the sea, far from land, and because of the contrary wind and the rough waves, it could not move forward and was suffering. Then, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to the disciples walking on the sea.

"But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea." (Matthew 14:24–25)

The disciples were crossing by boat according to Jesus' word, yet they met great difficulty. But Jesus knew that they were suffering, and He came to them walking on the water. Jesus is the One who rules the wind and the sea and saves His disciples in the midst of their suffering.

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[Question] 21. In Matthew 14:26, 27, why did the disciples become terrified and cry out, and what did Jesus say to them at that moment?

When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they thought He was a ghost, and they were troubled and cried out in fear. Jesus immediately made known who He was and told them to take heart and not to be afraid.

"And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.'" (Matthew 14:26–27)

By saying, "*Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid,*" Jesus calmed the disciples' fear. What the disciples had feared was not a ghost but Jesus, who had come to save them.

[Question] 22. Explain what Peter asked of Jesus in Matthew 14:28–30.

Peter asked Jesus that, if it was really He, He would command Peter to come to Him on the water.

"And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.'" (Matthew 14:28)

When Jesus told him to come, Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and went toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he became afraid and began to sink, and at that moment he asked Jesus again to save him.

"So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!'" (Matthew 14:29–30)

Therefore, Peter first asked to be allowed to come to Jesus walking on the water, and afterward, as he was sinking into the water, he pleaded with Him to save him.

[Question] 23. In Matthew 14:31, 32, what did Jesus say as He stretched out His hand to Peter?

Jesus immediately stretched out His hand to Peter as he was sinking, caught him, and saved him. And He called him a man of little faith and asked him why he had doubted.

"And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased." (Matthew 14:31–32)

Jesus did not leave Peter to sink but saved him at once. Then, when He got into the boat with Peter, the wind also ceased. Jesus is the One who rules not only Peter's life but even the wind and the sea.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 14:32, 33, what change took place when Jesus and Peter got into the boat?

When Jesus got into the boat with Peter, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed that He was truly the Son of God.

"And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'" (Matthew 14:32–33)

Jesus, who stilled the storm as soon as He got into the boat, is the Son of God, who has the authority to rule over nature. The

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disciples who experienced this worshiped Jesus and confessed that fact.

[Question] 25. What does the Scripture say happened at Gennesaret in Matthew 14:34–36?

When Jesus and His disciples arrived at the land of Gennesaret, the people of that place recognized Jesus and spread the news throughout the surrounding region. And they brought all the sick to Jesus and begged that the sick might only touch the hem of His garment.

"When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well." (Matthew 14:34–36)

All who touched the hem of Jesus' garment were healed of their diseases. Jesus has the power to heal every disease, and He bestowed grace on those who came to the Lord with faith. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Those who share the bread of life as royal priests

< Matthew 14:1-21 >

"At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him.' For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, 'Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter.' And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison. And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. Then his disciples came and took away the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus. When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

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When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

Herod, gripped by guilt

Matthew chapter 14 begins with the reaction of Herod the tetrarch, who heard the report about Jesus. The news that Jesus was healing the sick and performing amazing works reached Herod's ears. But Herod did not rightly recognize who Jesus was. He thought that John the Baptist, whom he had killed, had risen again and was performing these mighty works.

The problem of sin in a person's heart is not solved by power, wealth, or religious consolation. The wages of sin inevitably bring death and judgment. Romans 6:23 says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* What a sinner must do is not hide his sin but acknowledge it and come to Jesus Christ, who has completely removed that sin.

Guilt cannot save anyone. If, like Herod, a person remembers

his sin and fears it and yet does not come out before the truth, his heart only grows darker. True repentance does not remain in the feeling of anguish over sin; it is acknowledging the Word that God judges one's sins and turning to the Savior. Only when a person abandons the way of covering his sins with his own deeds and believes in the remission of sin that Jesus has accomplished can his conscience also become clean before God.

John, who did not fear the king before the Word

John the Baptist was imprisoned because he said that it was not right for Herod to have taken Herodias, his younger brother Philip's wife. John the Baptist did not change the Word of God even before the power of the king. He did not try to secure his own safety by saying what the king liked to hear, nor did he call what was wrong right.

Declaring sin to be sin requires love. Condemning a person out of hatred is entirely different from awakening him to his sin in order to give life to his soul. God's servant must not attack people with harsh emotions, but neither must he hide sin and judgment in order to please people. He must honestly reveal the reality of sin and, together with it, preach the gospel that has saved us from that sin.

John the Baptist, who prepared the way of salvation

The ministry of John the Baptist carries a meaning in the history of salvation that goes deeper than his rebuke of Herod's sin. As the last prophet of the Old Testament, he prepared the

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way of Jesus Christ. He cried out to the people to repent, leading them to acknowledge their sins and to receive the Savior who was to come.

John the Baptist was born as the son of Zacharias the priest. In the history of salvation, he was the representative of mankind and carried out the role of the last High Priest of the Old Testament. His most important mission was to baptize Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body.

Matthew 3:15 says, *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him."* To fulfill all righteousness means that God saves sinners in the most right and proper way. Through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, all the sins of mankind were passed on to Jesus.

After that, John the Baptist testified in John 1:29, *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"* John the Baptist made it clear that Jesus, whom he had baptized, was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Through this testimony, people could know who Jesus was and why He had to go to the cross.

That he baptized Jesus and testified of Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world becomes an important key to understanding the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we do not know when sin was passed on to Jesus, it is hard to understand the full meaning of His death even as we look at the cross. When we rightly know the office of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus and the cross are connected into one complete salvation.

The work entrusted to royal priests

Believers who have received the remission of sin have also received the office of royal priests in this world. 1 Peter 2:9 says, *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."*

A royal priest has two important responsibilities. One is to make clear by the Word of God what sin is, and the other is to lead sinners to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin. To point out sin alone without showing the way of salvation can drive a person into despair. Conversely, if we speak only of love without speaking of sin and judgment, a person cannot realize why he needs the Savior.

However, the one who preaches the gospel must not display his own superiority or despise others. We, too, were originally the same sinners, and we received the remission of sin by the mercy of God. Therefore, when we make sin known, we must have the heart and the wisdom that seek to give life to the soul. To those who want to hear the Word, those who mourn over their sins, and those who seek the truth, we must deliver God's judgment and salvation calmly and accurately.

After pointing out sin, the worker of the gospel must always explain how Jesus removed that sin. A sinner cannot pay the wages of his sins by himself, but Jesus took on those sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and received their punishment on the cross. To deliver this way of salvation accurately is the priestly mission that moves a person from condemnation to life.

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The end of a decision made in fear of people

Herod wanted to kill John the Baptist, but at first he could not carry it out for fear of the people. He did not fear God; he feared people's reactions. Then, when the daughter of Herodias danced at his birthday feast, he rashly swore before the people that he would give her whatever she asked.

When Herod heard the demand for the head of John the Baptist, he was sorry. He knew that the demand was evil. But to save his own face before those who sat with him, he did not withdraw the command. As the result of fearing people's eyes more than the will of God, he committed an irreversible sin.

Herod was a king, but in reality he was a slave dragged about by his own desires and by people's eyes. On the other hand, John the Baptist, imprisoned in the dungeon, was free in the Word of God even though he had lost the freedom of his body. A person's true freedom does not consist in doing everything he wants; it consists in being able to stand on the side of the truth even at the cost of loss and hardship.

The Lord, who had compassion on the multitude in the deserted place

When Jesus heard the news of John the Baptist's death, He departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. That John the Baptist had finished his mission meant that the time was also drawing near for Jesus to complete salvation on the cross. Having come in the flesh, Jesus knew sorrow and pain, and He prayed to fulfill the will of God the Father.

But a great multitude followed Him on foot from many towns. Jesus did not put first His intention to be alone; He saw the great

multitude and was moved with compassion for them. And He healed the sick among them. Even in His own sorrow, the Lord did not turn away from the souls who needed help.

Today as well, people live in a world like a deserted place. However much material wealth and knowledge increase, the sin of the heart and the fear of death are not resolved. No ruler or thinker of this world can remove man's sin and give him eternal life. The only One who can solve the fundamental problems of the soul and the body is Jesus Christ.

The Lord's compassion did not end as a feeling of pity. Jesus healed the sick, taught the Word, and actually gave the hungry multitude something to eat. True compassion sees the needs of souls and does the work entrusted to it. The church, too, must not merely look at the sufferings of this world but must preach the gospel of the remission of sin, which is what people need most.

The responsibility entrusted to the disciples

When the day grew late, the disciples said to send the multitude to the villages to buy themselves food. Humanly speaking, it was a reasonable judgment. There was nowhere in the deserted place to get food, and they had neither the money nor the provisions to feed so many people. The disciples looked at the problem on the basis of their own ability and circumstances.

But Jesus said that the multitude did not need to go away and that the disciples should give them something to eat. The Lord entrusted the disciples with a responsibility that looked impossible. This was not a command for the disciples to produce by themselves an ability they did not have. It was a word telling

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them to bring what they had to the Lord and rely on His power.

The disciples' responsibility did not lie in producing bread. It lay in receiving the bread the Lord had blessed and distributing it to the multitude. The worker of the gospel likewise does not invent a new salvation. He receives the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus has already completed, and delivers it to people just as it is. The One who gives life is the Lord, and we are the people who deliver that bread of life.

The Lord could have fed the multitude directly, without going through the disciples. Yet He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and had the disciples distribute them to the multitude in turn. The Lord uses His Church and His workers as instruments of salvation. The power comes from the Lord, but the responsibility of delivering it was entrusted to the disciples.

The faith that brings the little it has to the Lord

All the disciples had were five loaves and two fish. Before so great a crowd, it was so small that it would hardly make a meal for one person. But Jesus did not despise it; He told them to bring it to Him.

We often fail to begin God's work because we lack ability and possessions. We think we have little skill in speaking, little knowledge, and not enough time or money. But the Lord does not first demand what we do not have. He tells us to bring in faith the little that is now in our hands.

Jesus received the loaves and the fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them and distributed them to the disciples. When the Lord's blessing came upon it, the small amount of food fed a great crowd to the full with plenty left over. What matters is not how much we had at first, but into whose hands it

is entrusted.

The bread of life that gives life to the soul

The bread of the five loaves and two fish filled the bodies of the multitude that day. But man cannot live forever on the bread of the body alone. Even after eating, we grow hungry again; even after being healed of disease, the body dies someday. Therefore, man needs the food of life, which is more fundamental than the food of the body.

Jesus spoke in John 6:35, *"And Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'"* Jesus Himself is the bread of life who came down from heaven. When a sinner believes in his heart the salvation He has accomplished, he receives eternal life.

To eat the bread of life does not mean to eat the flesh of Jesus literally. It is to believe in one's heart the saving work Jesus accomplished for sinners. Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and bore them; bearing those sins, He was crucified, shed His blood, and was judged; and He rose again in three days.

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist is the saving work that corresponds to the water in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The blood of the cross is the judgment in which Jesus received all the punishment of the sins He had taken on, and the Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and that this salvation is true. Whoever believes in his heart this testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins and obtains eternal life.

The food of the body sustains life for a little while, but the

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gospel gives eternal life. Therefore, sharing the bread of life with souls is the most precious service in this world. Even if we help someone gain much success and knowledge in this world, if his problem of sin is not solved, he will receive no help at all before the final judgment.

We must deliver the grace of the remission of sin in its fullness

If we tell people to believe in Jesus but do not explain how He took on our sins, we are not sharing the whole bread of life. If we speak only of the blood of the cross and leave out the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, no one can know clearly what sins Jesus carried and was judged for on the cross.

It was because Jesus took on all our sins—past, present, and future—once and for all through the baptism He received from John the Baptist that He could die on the cross. The cross is not the place where sin was passed on to Him; it is the place of judgment where He paid the price of the sins He had taken on through His baptism. And the resurrection testifies that He is the Son of God, who overcame the power of sin and death.

Those who believe this gospel do not believe that only their original sin has been remitted while their personal sins must be washed away daily by prayers of repentance. They believe the Word that Jesus took on all the sins of the world completely and received the judgment of all those sins. The prayer of repentance is not a means of washing away sins anew; it is the saved person's acknowledging his wrongs before God and turning back from a life that has strayed from the Word.

The most precious food the church must distribute to the world is this gospel of the remission of sin. Helping those in

physical hardship is also necessary, but physical help alone cannot resolve eternal judgment. We must first help souls believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtain eternal life, and within that love we must also look after their physical needs.

A blessing to be shared with the whole world

Even after the multitude had eaten their fill, the leftover fragments filled twelve baskets. The Lord's grace did not end at barely relieving their want. It was abundant enough for everyone to eat and still have some left over. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the perfect gospel, which lacks nothing even after saving every sinner in the world.

The gospel is not for one particular nation or for a few religious people. The sin of the world that Jesus took on through the baptism He received from John the Baptist includes the sins of the people of every nation and every age. Therefore, the church must not keep this gospel to itself but deliver it to souls of every country and every language.

Like John the Baptist, we must speak clearly of sin and the truth, and like the disciples, we must diligently share the bread the Lord has given. We must neither hide the truth for fear of people nor avoid our responsibility by looking at our own lack. The Lord, who called us out of darkness and made us royal priests, has entrusted this work to us.

Even if what we have looks small, we must bring it to the Lord. We must receive the bread of life the Lord has blessed, share it with those near us, and deliver it also to souls in distant lands who have not yet heard the gospel. For sinners to receive the remission of sin and become children of God through that

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work—this is the way the blessing of the five loaves and two fish continues to appear today through the church.

What we share is not human philosophy or a particular culture. It is the righteousness of God, which Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. This gospel gives the same remission of sin to every people, and it makes everyone who believes into God's own people. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Meeting the Lord and having the problem of our souls resolved is the greatest blessing

< Matthew 14:13-21 >

"When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

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The passage we have just read is about the time when Jesus performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. This was the era when the people of Israel had become a colony of Rome and were living under its oppression and plunder.

The people of Israel always had problems. They had no hope for the future. The independence of their nation looked impossible. Even when they farmed and made a little income, it was all plundered away in taxes. Everything was impoverished. The people were living in wretched poverty.

Problems are solved only when we follow Jesus, not man

People in those days were living amid many problems. People living in this age are likewise living amid problems. It says that the people followed Jesus that day, and they followed Him like that in order to have their problems solved.

There is no life without problems. Therefore, we must think deeply about who it is that can solve our problems. Following man does not really solve these problems. Only by following Jesus are these problems solved. The people of Israel knew that fact. So they followed Jesus, and that day the sick were healed and the hungry ate their fill.

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish and the twelve baskets

Jesus performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, and as many as five thousand people ate their fill, and the leftover fragments still filled twelve baskets. When people who

had been destitute and starving once began to eat, how much would they have eaten? A person who is very hungry eats a great deal indeed. Yet even after they all ate their fill, twelve baskets were left over.

Whom should lives burdened with problems follow? Only by following Jesus can they have their problems solved. For it is Jesus who solves the problems of life—the problems of the soul and the problems of the body.

Therefore, people must meet Jesus. They must meet Jesus Christ, who came by the water and the Spirit. Only when they meet Him can the problems of their souls and the problems of their bodies be solved. Jesus took on all our sins by receiving baptism from John, received all the judgment for those sins in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the cross, and rose from death, thereby completely solving the problem of the sin of our souls. In order to meet Jesus, who came by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must meet the Church of God and be united with the Church of God.

Today I heard the news that an elderly person whom one of our sisters had been serving in her home passed away. But we do not know whether that person received the remission of sin, whether he accepted the gospel of the water and the Spirit. A life that accepts the gospel before departing is a truly happy life.

When I quietly consider how stubborn people are, I am amazed anew at what a great thing it is to have received this salvation. Among the multitude of people living in this world, how many truly believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Yet we have believed that gospel and received the remission of sin—this is a truly amazing thing.

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To meet Jesus, we must meet the Church of God

In those days, too, people followed Jesus. The sick were healed. Those who needed the food of the spirit heard the Word and received the food of the spirit, and those who needed the food of the body received it, ate, and lived. In this age, too, there is no one without problems. But when we believe in Jesus, who came by the water and the Spirit, and meet Him, and when we are united with the Church of God, those problems are solved.

How do all the people of this world get by? Do they have no problems? Their problems are truly enormous. How, then, can they live on?

They must meet Jesus. They must follow after Jesus. Then what must they do to meet Jesus? They must meet the Church of God. When they meet the Church of God through the word of God preached in the Church and through the books, they meet Jesus. When they meet Jesus—who received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, received all the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the cross, and completed our salvation by rising from death—their problem of sin is solved. And when they meet the Church of God and come out to it like this, their bodies can also live.

I believe it is truly God's blessing that we have met the Church of God and can live like this. For Jesus is the One who solves all the problems of our souls and our bodies. We have already met Him and are living well. But there are still many people who have not.

The church that preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit

As a whole, our Church is preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We are sending out many books. I am truly thankful that we can carry out this work like this. How many people are now meeting the Lord through the books and having the problems of their souls resolved? There are many people who want to do rewarding work that gives them self-respect in this world but cannot; yet we have gained our sense of worth through this work, and for this I am truly glad and thankful.

Above all, it is truly a matter of thanks that others have met Jesus, but I give thanks most of all that I myself have met the Lord. From my birth I lived amid many problems. From childhood on, I lived through one problem after another.

In this world there are many false truths that have departed from God. When I was young, my parents believed in Daesoon Jinrihoe. If we look into its roots, it is like this. Long ago a certain man tried Confucianism, Buddhism, and Cheondogyo one after another, and even came into contact with Christianity, but he did not receive any resolution in his heart. So he went into the mountains to pray, and suddenly, it is said, the room became bright, and he called himself the Jade Emperor and made people recite incantations. If you interpret the meaning of that incantation, it comes down to saying that one must meet God.

Yet he mixed it with Confucianism and mixed it with Buddhism, and, obtaining a Christian book from somewhere, he turned the Bible completely upside down. And so they clamor about the ‘great opening of a new age,’ saying a new world is coming, a millennial kingdom is coming, and that people must prepare for that era. They quote the words of Scripture to lead people astray. But this is an utter falsehood and deception.

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While saying that one must meet God, they took Jesus out altogether, and so he himself ended up becoming the Jade Emperor. That man is already dead, yet now his son has stepped forward and is spreading that falsehood. We must clearly discern such false truths.

The leaders of this world cannot fully solve the problems of life

In the days of the early church, when Jesus was in the land of Israel, great crowds of people followed Him around. Why did they follow Him? Because, above all, by following Jesus they could hear the word of God, and they could also have the problems of their bodies resolved. In those days they had no other way to have their problems solved, but through Jesus they were solved.

In this age, too, people take hold of someone and follow him. These days they take hold of the leader of their nation and set their hopes on him. The one who governs a nation may indeed do his work well in his own way. We, too, must pray for him. But is he really someone who can fully solve the problems of life? He may do so to some degree, but he cannot give a complete solution. Jesus, however, solves those problems completely.

Meeting the Lord is the greatest blessing

Having met Jesus, doing rewarding work, and living while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit like this, I cannot express how thankful I am that I have met Jesus and that I have met the Church of God. We must give thanks without ceasing and live always rejoicing with glad hearts.

Meeting the Lord and having the problem
of our souls resolved is the greatest blessing

Brothers and sisters, whatever hardship you may suffer in this world, it is a thousand times, a hundred times better than failing to meet the Lord and failing to meet the Church of God. No—it is a billion times better. If we were living in this world without this Church, how wretched would we be? We would have no hope at all. But having met the Lord—who received baptism from John and took on all the sin of the world, received all the judgment for those sins on the cross, and rose from death to save us from sin—do we not live each day doing rewarding work, and can we not work again tomorrow? We are not at a loss for lack of work. Rather, the work is so plentiful that we can keep on working.

While preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we carry out various kinds of work together. We farm and do this and that, and through those works we preach the gospel. In that way, as God allows, we work and live fruitfully.

The most wretched life is the life lived only for oneself

It is not that I am hoping for such things. We cannot know what work may take place when next week comes. But above all, I am thankful again and again that I have met the Lord through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do you also feel this and think this way?

This is not just something we say among ourselves; meeting the Lord is truly a blessed thing. It is because we have met the Lord that we do this work; had we not met Him, we would be living each day only for our own problems. How miserable a thing that is! To live only for oneself—that is the most miserable thing of all. But living in the Lord, our lives are worthwhile. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Let us become true wheat and greet the Lord

< Matthew 14:13-21 >

"When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, 'This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.' But Jesus said to them, 'They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.' And they said to Him, 'We have here only five loaves and two fish.' He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children."

The passage we have read today is the event in which the Lord fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Before this Word, I look back once again on the great grace God

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has bestowed on us.

The grace of God, who has made us serve the gospel

It has now been well over twenty years since we established the church in this place. When I look back on the time we first settled here, I realize anew how greatly God has blessed this church.

God established the Church of God before us. He also led the souls in this place to us, and He made us serve the gospel to the whole world. Looking back on the days we have served this gospel, there have been truly many hardships, and just as many blessings.

In the beginning we had nothing. But God commanded us to preach the gospel to the whole world, and He led us to establish churches in place after place. Even in difficult circumstances we established churches in several cities, and with the single heart of preaching the gospel at home and throughout the world, we founded a mission school, trained students, and sent them out to the fields.

Nearly thirty years have passed like that. When I think of how many hardships we went through to serve the gospel, and how great a passion we carried, the memories come back fresh. In those days we had only one heart: to keep God's command to preach the gospel to the whole world.

Now the framework of the ministry has been established, and God's workers have been raised up in many places. They are serving the gospel in many parts of the world. In the end, what we have done is clear. We have preached the gospel. We have preached to the whole world the gospel of the remission of sin:

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the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and His resurrection from death.

In the first half of this year as well, we carried on the ministry. For three or four months we could not send out books because of our circumstances. When we could not send books for lack of funds, I cannot tell you how heavy and painful my heart was. Then God opened the way again, and recently we were able to send out many books. In the first half of this year alone, nearly four hundred thousand books have gone out. When I think of how God has used us like this, I can only give thanks.

Discern the signs of this age

I sense that not many days remain in which we can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The world has changed so much. Therefore, we must watch carefully how the world is turning. We must not be ignorant of this.

The Lord rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees with these words: *"When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times" (Matthew 16:2–3)*. He was saying: you can discern the weather, so why can you not discern the signs of this age?

We must serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit knowing well how this age is changing. We must know what kind of time this is and preach the gospel in keeping with that time.

The Lord also said, *"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places" (Matthew 24:7)*, and, *"All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:8)*. But the end

is not yet. The Lord said, *"All these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6)*.

Now is precisely that time. The disasters have already begun, and this is the period when they unfold and spread in earnest. That is why natural disasters are also occurring more and more. Nation stands against nation and quarrels, each trying to protect its own country, and everywhere the world is in turmoil. The quiet world is already gone, and even the hearts of the people are split to the extremes.

At such a time, we resolve all the more to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We have been preaching until now the gospel of the eternal remission of sin—that Jesus Christ paid the wages of our sins with the baptism He received from John and with the blood of the cross—but from now on we must devote even more care and send out even more books.

Now is the time for sowing the seed

Our preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus Christ came to this earth, received the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, was nailed to the cross and received the judgment of sin in our place, and rose from death to become our Savior—may look as if it has no great effect for the moment. Then what time is it now? Now is the time when the farmer sows the seed. It is the time to plow the field, open the furrows, and sow the seed.

When this seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we have sown is buried in the ground, sprouts, and grows, it will blossom and bear fruit in the last days and fulfill the will of God. The paper books, e-books, and audiobooks we have delivered are now in the hands of countless people of this world. Some

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have set them on their bookshelves; some have heard the gospel from someone. Such people are spread all over the world.

The final harvest and the return of the Lord

Then the time will come when the world truly becomes hard to live in. Life will become extremely difficult, and people will begin to realize that the end the Bible speaks of is coming. They will come to know that Jesus Christ is truly coming again. Only then will people's hearts turn to one thing. They will remember the gospel they once heard, the book they once saw, the very book on the bookshelf at home, and the person who once preached the gospel to them.

That will be the time of the final harvest. People will then confirm the gospel of the water and the Spirit anew, realizing, 'So my sins were passed on to Jesus' body through the baptism He received from John, and He carried those sins, was crucified, and shed His blood and died in my place.' And they will go find the person who preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them, hear the Word, and confirm it again through the books and the e-books. And so this gospel will spread throughout the whole world.

If you go out to the fields, you see that when rain does not fall at the time it ought to, the crops instead hurry to blossom and bear fruit. Knowing they cannot live any longer, they put out their last strength, bear fruit, and die of themselves. So it will be with those who encountered the gospel in the last days. They will believe and hurriedly preach the gospel to others. At that time no one will be able to stop them.

In that day truly many people will be saved. Countless people will believe in the Lord and be martyred as they keep their faith.

For the Antichrist will threaten and kill those who do not listen to his words. After the final harvest is accomplished in that way, this world will perish, and those who resist to the end will go into the fire of brimstone that is never quenched. Then the Lord will return, and from that time the Millennial Kingdom begins. The Rapture, which we have spoken of only in words, will take place at that very time.

We are God's servants living in the last days

Therefore, we are now the runners of the last leg. Now is the era of sowing the seed. So we must send the books that carry the gospel of the water and the Spirit throughout the whole world and hand them out. People may not read them well even when we hand them out now. But later, when life becomes hard, they will read those books, believe, and come to understand.

In place after place, God's workers are doing this work. Just as there are God's workers throughout our country, there are such workers in the many countries of the world. They are now doing the work of sowing the seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Truly, we must live discerning this age well. Because it is the last days, people's hearts are all the colder, there is no passion of faith, and people of faith are few. Preaching the gospel is far harder than it was twenty years ago. Twenty years ago, if you took hold of a passerby and spoke, he would listen with attention. But now, if you take hold of someone and speak, he dislikes it and backs away. It has become that hard an age for preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

We are God's servants living in the last days of this world. We must live knowing this. Great miraculous help may not often

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come right now. But we must not look only at the circumstances before our eyes. We must live looking at the things God will do from now on. Even in this hard age, people live intoxicated with the present. But we must not let our hearts be stolen by the present alone; we must live looking at what God is going to do.

The day is not far off when the preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit will be over. The salvation the Lord promised mankind, the appearance of the Antichrist, the collapse of this world, and the return of the Lord are not far away. I look toward that day. I look with the thought that if I live just a little longer, I may see that day with these very eyes. We can know the Lord's return. We know that the Lord has already come near, to the very door. But the world truly does not know this.

To the people of this world, there seems to be no better world than now. But as we see it, the Lord is truly at the door. The disasters have already begun, and we, too, may meet those disasters. Therefore, we must prepare well in advance in many ways, so that we can serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit without great hindrance. Knowing and believing in our hearts that this world can suddenly be destroyed, we must prepare beforehand.

The death of John the Baptist and the multitude in the deserted place

Looking at the background of the passage we read today, John the Baptist had been beheaded by Herod. John the Baptist pointed out Herod's sin and was put to death. It was because he rebuked Herod, saying that it was not right for him to have taken his younger brother's wife and made her his own. In shame and fear, Herod shut John the Baptist up in prison.

But that woman was more evil still, and her daughter was more evil still. That daughter came out at Herod's feast and danced, and captivated Herod's heart. Herod promised to give her whatever she asked, and the daughter asked for the head of John the Baptist. Because it was a promise made before his officials, Herod could not take it back; he sent men to behead John the Baptist in prison and had his head brought on a platter and given to her. After John's disciples buried his body, they came to Jesus and told Him of this. Right after that comes the passage we read today.

When Jesus heard this news, He departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But the multitude heard of it and followed Him on foot from many towns. Many sick people also followed. Jesus went out, saw the great multitude, was moved with compassion for them, and healed the sick among them.

"You give them something to eat"

Meanwhile, evening had come. As the sun went down, the disciples began to worry. The disciples were men who knew people's circumstances well. They thought that since this great crowd had met the evening in a deserted place, they should be sent quickly to the villages to buy themselves food. So they made this request to Jesus: *"This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food" (Matthew 14:15).*

But Jesus said this: *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matthew 14:16)*. He meant that there was no need for them to go to the villages to buy food and come back. He was telling the disciples to give them something to eat themselves.

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Among the disciples there were some who were quick with figures. To feed this great crowd, even two hundred denarii would not be enough. In today's terms, even one meal for them would cost a great sum. The question was: do we have that kind of money?

"Five loaves and two fish"

Yet the disciples had already tasted the blessing of Jesus. Not long before, they had seen the Lord feed a great multitude with a little. Such things had happened not just once but several times. So the disciples answered Him: *"We have here only five loaves and two fish" (Matthew 14:17)*.

It was no more than five loaves and two small fish, enough to fill a small lunchbox. Jesus said, *"Bring them here to Me" (Matthew 14:18)*. Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass, took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. He asked God the Father to bless the food so that all this multitude could eat.

When the Lord blessed it, the bread did not multiply all at once with a great commotion. It did not suddenly become much, like a trick of the eye. As the Lord asked the blessing, the original loaves remained as they were, while bread and fish kept coming forth. So the Lord broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples distributed them to the multitude.

In that way everyone ate their fill, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

At that time, the women and children were not included in the count. It is similar to the way in the Old Testament, when the men able to go to war were counted, only the men twenty years

old and above were numbered. But this is by no means a demeaning of women. On the contrary, mothers are truly precious. A mother conceives and bears a life, holds in her arms the child who cries and fusses day and night, feeds him, and raises him. Changing him from the wet spot to the dry, she raises up so many fine people. Though her strength may be weak, she endures all this and carries out precious work; she is a truly precious being before God.

The five loaves are none other than you and me

The Lord did this because He is God. He said, *"They do not need to go away,"* and, *"Bring them here to Me" (Matthew 14:18),* and He bestowed His blessing upon them and accomplished His will. I believe that this work was done precisely for you and me. God has blessed you and me and made us preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world.

How many are we, really? Truly few. But God said, *"Bring them here to Me."* God has blessed you and me and blessed this Church, and made us supply food to all the people of the world. This is the blessing of God.

We say that we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but who is it, really, that preaches the gospel? The Lord said, *"They do not need to go away,"* and, *"Bring them here to Me"*—and those five loaves and two fish are precisely you and me. God has blessed you and me and made us carry out the preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God has blessed this Church. And so we see with our own eyes how He keeps, protects, and blesses the works we do.

What could we boast of in ourselves? Nothing. It is only that

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God, through you and me, through this Church and its saints, has made us distribute food through His workers to the souls of the whole world. He has given us the grace to feed starving souls. I believe that God will continue to raise up that blessed work, so that this gospel of the water and the Spirit may be delivered in full to all who wait for the food of the spirit.

God accomplishes what we ask

When I quietly look back on the way we have come, what is there that we did well by ourselves? It has truly been a hard road. In the first half of this year alone, there was the matter of taking over a piece of land. In circumstances where money was not plentiful, we came to take over a piece of land that was not easy to secure. There is still debt left to repay, but in the end that work was accomplished.

God accomplishes what we ask. This is not my personal matter alone. What you and I desire—what the Church desires—God accomplishes it all. God has supplied the land and buildings, the finances, and the various needs of the ministry for preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I believe that He will bless us and complete the work of preaching the gospel.

In everything we have done, God has helped us. It was so even when we filed our first patents. Fearing that someone else might file a similar patent, I had what came to me overnight written down the next morning, and we applied for several patents—and they were all granted. I know that all of this is God's blessing. Our preaching of the gospel to the whole world is not my work but God's work.

God, who has made us preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world

Some time ago I went in person to a major book distributor in Japan to deliver our books. Christianity had entered that country a hundred years before ours, and it had many theologians. But as for the gospel of the water and the Spirit that these books proclaim, not a single person had ever dealt with it. I had them confirm it for themselves, but they could not find even one such theologian.

So I said to them: because the theologians of your country have failed to deal with this matter, I have come instead to preach this gospel. I asked them to take on the books that preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in the end the books could be sold in the bookstores of Japan.

The gospel we preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel that Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, carried all the sins of the world once and for all; that He received the judgment of those sins in our place on the cross, shedding His blood and dying; and that He rose again in three days, thereby accomplishing our salvation in full. In this world there are many who claim to preach the gospel, yet whose message is not complete. But God has entrusted this gospel of the water and the Spirit to us and made us preach it to the whole world.

I never think that I have done well by myself. God met me through the Word, gave that Word to my heart, joined fellow workers to me, and made me do this work—that is all. In fact, I am a sinner. When I talk about the works the Lord has blessed me to accomplish, sometimes the words drift as though I had done them well myself. Each time, I look at myself and humble myself before the Lord. In the end, all of this is what the Lord has done. God has blessed us.

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This business we are carrying on is also God's blessing. Just as He said, *"They do not need to go away," "You give them something to eat,"* and, *"Bring them here to Me,"* God has blessed you and me and made us carry this work. It was truly difficult work, but God opened the way. I know that all of this is God's blessing for the preaching of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

And so God has blessed us, fed the people of many nations of the world with the food of the spirit, and let us gather up the twelve baskets that remained. This is the blessing of God. The five loaves and two fish here mean precisely you and me. God has blessed us and made us preach the gospel to the whole world. It is not because we are able, but because God has blessed us—I know it is so. How fortunate and how thankful a thing this is!

Let us share the food of salvation with the whole world

I am truly glad to have come here and met you, my fellow workers. That we live so happily within our Church has also been entirely God's blessing. The Lord has led us until now, and I believe He will lead us in the days to come. If we have accomplished anything, it is God's blessing; it is not that we have done it well.

God gave us land, and its value has even risen. But such things are only passing. That we live like this and that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is being preached is due to the Lord alone. Truly I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Believe that Jesus Christ is God, and live by that faith

< Matthew 14:18-33 >

"He said, 'Bring them here to Me.' Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord,

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save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.'"

Jesus heard the news that John the Baptist had died. John the Baptist was martyred, beheaded in prison. So John's disciples took his body and buried it. When our Lord heard this news, He departed by boat to a deserted place by Himself. Hearing of the death of John the Baptist, our Lord knew that His own time was drawing near.

John the Baptist testified about Jesus. He testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist also baptized Jesus. And he pointed out people's sins incisively and turned them back to God. John the Baptist, as God's servant, as a prophet, and as the one who came to prepare the way of Jesus Christ, fulfilled his mission and was martyred. When Jesus heard this news, He went to a deserted place by Himself.

Jesus is the Son of God. He is also the God who created the heavens and the earth. That God came to this earth in human flesh. He came to save us, mankind, from sin. Because He had a body, He needed to prepare His heart for the death on the cross and the resurrection that lay ahead. So when Jesus heard this news, He went to the deserted place.

The Son of God, who came in human flesh

After that, Jesus went up on a mountain again. When He had finished a work, He would go up on a mountain alone and pray

personally. We can see that while our Lord was on this earth, He often took time to pray. He is God, yet He also came to this earth to save mankind from sin. For that work He put on human flesh. Therefore, He needed to follow the will of God the Father and refuse the will of His own flesh. That, I believe, is why He prayed as He did.

What if Jesus had not put on human flesh? Jesus had already received baptism from John and taken on the sins of mankind. If there had been no death on the cross ahead of Him, He would not have needed to pray so often. But He was born on this earth with a body. Because of that, He had many struggles, both physical and spiritual. He had inner conflicts. So He often prayed before God the Father.

Because Jesus lived on this earth in human flesh, some people think that He is not God. They suppose that He is neither the Son of God nor divine. But that is not so. Rather, Jesus was born on this earth in human flesh precisely to save us human beings from sin. We must know this. When we look at Jesus praying, we can see that He possessed not only divinity but also humanity.

The righteous God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Our God is a righteous God. Because God is righteous, His Son Jesus had to put on human flesh. And to take on the sins of mankind, He had to receive baptism from John. Through the baptism Jesus received from John, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus. And to be judged for those sins, Jesus' body had to be nailed to the cross. For only when Jesus shed His blood and died could the sins of mankind be washed away and receive

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their judgment. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore, when God sent His Son to this earth as the Savior, He had Him put on human flesh. Jesus carried the sin of the world once and for all by receiving baptism from John. And He was judged for those sins on the cross, shedding His blood and dying. And He rose again from death in three days, accomplishing our salvation in full. To fulfill this gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus prayed on this earth whenever things were hard. Through our Lord, God wanted to teach us this prayer and this faith—the faith that believes in the Lord.

The miracle of feeding five thousand with five loaves and two fish

When our Lord heard of the death of John the Baptist and went to the deserted place, many people gathered, having heard the rumor that He was there. Jesus saw the great multitude that had come out to Him and was moved with compassion for them. So He healed the sick among them. Meanwhile, evening had come. The disciples came to Jesus and made a request. They asked Him to send the people into the villages to buy themselves food, for it was mealtime.

Jesus said, *"They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat" (Matthew 14:16)*. The disciples answered that all they had were five loaves and two fish. That was all, they said. Jesus said, *"Bring them here to Me" (Matthew 14:18)*. It was a small amount, enough to fill one lunchbox—just five barley loaves and two fish.

Jesus took them in His hands, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them. He asked God the Father to bless the food so that all these people could eat. Then He broke the bread and gave it

to the disciples. And the barley loaves and the fish kept coming forth. Jesus had the multitude sit down in groups, one company after another. And what He broke off and handed out, the disciples took and distributed to the people.

Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Counting the women and the children, there would have been more than ten thousand—roughly fifteen thousand, one might estimate. With a single lunchbox He fed all those people, and the fragments that remained were gathered up, filling twelve baskets. Through this work Jesus showed that He is the Son of God, and that He is God to us. At the same time, we can also see that although He is the Creator God, He came in human flesh to save us mankind from sin and was with us as a frail being.

A work that only God can do

Jesus has two natures. Seen one way, He is very frail; seen another way, He is the all-perfect God. When Jesus heard the news that John the Baptist had been beheaded, He went to the deserted place. Why did He go there? Because He, too, had a human body. He had to prepare for what lay ahead, to commune with God the Father, and to seek His help. That is why He went to the deserted place; and even after bestowing the blessing of the five loaves and two fish, He sent the disciples away first and went up on the mountain alone to pray.

Looking at Jesus in one way, He seems a frail man in whom no divine nature can be found at all. He seems no different from us, a mere human being. But when we look at this blessed work of the five loaves and two fish, we can see that this is something that could never be done unless He were God, unless He were

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the Son of God. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. When He said, 'Let there be,' all things came to be, and it was good in God's sight. That same God fed some fifteen thousand people in the open field with a single lunchbox.

If you had been there, what would you have taken Jesus to be? You would not have taken Him for an ordinary man. Healing the sick was, if anything, the smaller work. With one lunchbox He fed more than fifteen thousand people, and there was more than enough left over. Every time He blessed it and broke it off, more kept coming. All ate their fill, and twelve baskets remained. This shows the divinity of Jesus. It shows that Jesus is God, that He is the Son of God, that He is God the second Person within the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

There have been people in this world who claim to display supernatural powers. They appear on television and are said to have turned the hands of a clock or bent spoons without touching them. But could such a person seat fifteen thousand people and, blessing one lunchbox before God, feed them all and have twelve baskets left over? Could any magician in this world, or any religious figure claiming special powers, do such a thing? This is something only God can do. God alone is the One who can do this work, and He actually did it.

So we come to see both things. We see that Jesus is God. And we also see that He came as the Savior to save us from sin. The name Jesus means Savior. Jesus came as the Savior. While saving you and me from sin, He came to this earth in the very same flesh as you and me. Therefore, Jesus is the Savior who saves us from sin, and He is also the Almighty God. We can know this.

John the Baptist finished all his work and departed. John the Baptist was the same age as Jesus. He was thirty years old when he baptized Jesus. John the Baptist fulfilled his whole mission

and died. Jesus needed to show His work to His disciples and to us, to lead us to believe, and to teach us by His Word before He departed. That is why the Lord performed such miracles and wonders.

The meaning contained in the five loaves and two fish

He took the five loaves and two fish and blessed them. Here the number five speaks of the grace of God. And the fish speaks of the church. In the days of the early church, believers used a silent sign among themselves. They would draw a fish on the ground to confirm one another's faith. When one person drew a fish, the other would see it and ask, 'Do you believe?' Then he would confess, 'Yes, I believe that the Lord is the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Such a meaning was contained in that fish.

So God, through this Church of God, distributes the food of life to the whole world in overflowing abundance. He grants that kind of blessing. The Church of God still works today with the five barley loaves and the two fish. God has poured out the blessing of the gospel of the water and the Spirit upon the Church of God. He has given the blessing of sharing that bread of life so that all the people of the whole world may eat and still have some left over.

I believe this is what He is telling us. We are doing this work now. I believe that God has blessed us so that many people all over the world will eat the bread of life, with plenty to spare. I believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit will continue to be preached in fullness and that many souls will be saved.

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Jesus, who went up the mountain again to pray

Let us look at what the Lord says from verse 22 on. After performing the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus sent the disciples away in haste. He told them to get into the boat and go to the other side. After sending the multitude away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. When the sun had set and darkness fell, He was there alone. He went up to pray, so He must have prayed.

Jesus must have prayed something like this: 'Father, John the Baptist has finished all his work and gone. Now that I have taken on all the sins of mankind through John, it seems the time has come for Me to die.' Jesus had already received baptism from John and carried the sin of the world. Therefore, He now had to arm His heart for the cross. Because He had a human body, there was much anguish within that frail flesh.

Indeed, before He died on the cross, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed before God the Father until His sweat became like great drops of blood. He pleaded with the Father, asking whether, if it were possible, the matter might be resolved some other way, without dying on the cross. But at last He said that He wanted the Father's will to be done. He gave up His own way and entrusted everything to the will of the Father. He firmly resolved to obey completely. After that, Jesus hung silently on the cross, accomplished everything, and died. Thus He was able to complete the work of saving mankind from sin.

Jesus, who came walking on the water to His disciples in the storm

Here another event appears. The disciples took the boat and

went far from land, deep into the middle of the water. Then the wind blew hard and the waves rose high. So the disciples were in distress. The waves kept breaking over them, and they could do nothing. They rowed toward where they wanted to go, but the boat was pushed by the wind and could not advance. The boat seemed about to capsize, and water came into it, and the disciples were terrified.

While the disciples were crying out in confusion, Jesus came to them in the fourth watch of the night. The fourth watch is a late hour of the night. between three and six in the morning, while it was still dark, when it was pitch dark. At that dark hour, in the midst of their distress, Jesus came to them walking on the water. He came walking on those very waters where the waves were rising and the wind was blowing fiercely.

In that pitch-dark night, with the waves rising and the wind blowing hard, something moving appeared on the water. It caught the disciples' eyes. How startled they must have been! So the disciples cried out that it was a ghost, that an apparition had appeared. A great commotion broke out. But the Lord said, *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27)*.

Peter answered, *"Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (Matthew 14:28)*. When Jesus said to come, Peter came down out of the boat and walked on the water. The only ones in this world who have walked on water are Jesus and Peter. Among animals there are some that walk on water. But as for human beings, without any equipment, only Peter and Jesus have walked on water.

As Peter was walking toward Jesus, the waves surged beneath him and he heard the sound of the wind, and he became afraid. His faith failed, and he began to sink into the water. Then Jesus immediately stretched out His hand, caught him, lifted him up, and brought him into the boat with Himself. And He rebuked

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him, saying, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31)*

"Truly You are the Son of God"

When He got into the boat with them, the wind ceased. Then the disciples in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33)*. You truly walk even on the water, and You are subject to nothing in this created world; truly You are the Son of God. You are God, and You are also the Son of God. Jesus wanted to give His disciples this faith. That is why He showed them such miracles and wonders.

There is something we learn through this passage. Even though we have tasted the miracle of the five loaves and two fish and received that blessing and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world, it is not that there are no hardships within the church. There are hardships even as we follow the Lord. Therefore, we must pray. Whenever there is hardship, we must pray before our Lord. And when we pray, we must have faith—the faith that the Lord is the Son of God and the God who has saved us.

To put it simply, it is this: He is God, but He came to this earth as the Savior to save us from sin. And He accomplished that work in full. Yet He is fundamentally God, God in reality, and He is in heaven now as God. He also sent us the Holy Spirit, and He is with us and helps us; He is our God and our Shepherd. He is the Shepherd who watches over us; He also becomes our Friend, and He also becomes our King. His ministries are many, but He was God in reality. Therefore, when we believe in Jesus Christ, we must know, believe, and rely on Him as God.

Live praying in faith

As we who have met the Lord follow Him, many dangers lie in wait. Each time, it is hard and difficult. Each time, we must pray before our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we pray, we must have faith. Jesus walked on the water, told the disciples to go on ahead, came walking on the water again, and told Peter to come walking to Him. And when Peter's faith failed and he was sinking, the Lord lifted him up and got into the boat together with him. What does all this mean? In the days ahead, things like what happened to John the Baptist would happen to the disciples as well. At such times, they must not be without faith in Jesus Christ.

Because they had to have faith, Jesus performed these miracles and wonders together with His disciples in order to teach them true faith. This is a word given to you and me as well. Following the Lord does not mean there are no hardships; there are hardships. When hardship comes, we must pray. But not prayer alone—we must have the faith that Jesus Christ is God. We must not become faithless, falling into discouragement and despair, sinking into the world, and perishing. We must truly come before Jesus with faith. We must pray in faith and have our problems solved. We must please God by faith, and by faith become those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world.

We must learn this lesson and hold this faith. Truly, Jesus is the Son of God. Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. To plant true faith in His disciples, Jesus told them to take the boat and cross over first. And when the wind rose and the waves beat, He came to them again in the fourth watch of the night. In this way, Jesus clearly revealed who He is. You are truly God. And as the Son of God,

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You are the Savior who came into this world to deliver sinners from sin. You came to save us, yet You are fundamentally God. You are our Savior God. Jesus led His disciples to confess this.

You and I also meet the threats of Satan the devil as we believe in and follow the Lord. There are many vexing troubles as well. At such times it is truly hard and difficult. But we must pray about everything with the faith that relies on and believes in God. We must hold fast by faith to the fact that God solves those problems and helps us. We must become those who stand firm on that faith and receive the solution and live. For this we must pray, but within that prayer there must be the faith that Jesus Christ is God. We must have the faith that believes that He is the living God and our Savior—that He is alive even now and has power. Only with that faith can we follow the Lord to the end.

We have weaknesses and shortcomings, and so we are often discouraged. But in whatever situation, we must hold on to who Jesus is. We must hold on to the fact that He is God. He came to this earth, received baptism from John, and hung on the cross to wash away our sins. He removed our sins and saved us. We must believe this and stand before God by faith. We must live in this world by faith and follow the Father's will. We must receive help by faith and solve all the hard things we go through. And that faith must remain unchanged forever. Do you see, brothers and sisters?

Satan the devil growls like a wolf and attacks in packs, trying to devour the weak among God's people. At such times, without faith in the Lord, we die. To those who have received the remission of sin and to those who have not, Satan the devil whispers alike: how can someone as lacking as you believe in God? In that way he tries to tear down our faith and kill us. At such times we must stand firm in faith. We must cry, 'Away with

you, Satan! Even if I am like this, the Lord has saved me,' and stand our ground.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, there are dangers and worries on the road as we follow the Lord. In all such problems we must pray before God. We must pray with the faith that Jesus Christ is God. By holding that faith we receive help. If we have faith, we receive God's help. We must know and surely believe that the Lord has taught us faith in this way. You and I must learn faith. We must learn by faith that the word of God is the truth. We must believe with the faith that the word of God is fulfilled exactly as it says.

Believe that Jesus Christ is God, and live by that faith

The Bible is the truth. I, too, am learning this truth again these days through a hard experience. Looking back, it is because I joined hands with someone who is not born again that I suffer this hardship. The Bible tells us not to join hands and work together with those who are not born again. This is the truth, yet I treated that word lightly. So I suffer hardship. Truly, when we work with those who are born again, God helps us. But working together with someone who is not born again is a thing that burns the heart.

In the Bible, the nation of Israel was divided into north and south. The king of the south joined hands with the king of the north and went out to attack another nation. But in God's sight, one of them was a man who at least tried to follow God's will, while the other had followed the sin of Jeroboam and completely departed from God. Because they were of the same blood, they joined hands, worked together, and went to war together—and

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were struck down and suffered. I feel anew that the word of God is truly the truth. There is repentance in my heart. I must pray that I do not fall into temptation. You also truly need faith as you follow the Lord.

The disciples confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God."* In your heart and mine there must also be that faith. Who is Jesus? He is God and our Savior. He is the Lord of life, who created the heavens and the earth and all things and made you and me. He washed away your sins and mine with the truth of the water and the Spirit. He is the Savior who came to this earth, received baptism from John and took on our sins, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from death to save us. Such faith must be clear in our hearts.

With such faith, we must believe that Jesus is my Shepherd and that the Father of Jesus Christ is my Father. He is our Father. Therefore, when we ask for help before God the Father and before Jesus Christ, He hears our prayers and, if it accords with His will, He helps us. For we are God's people and God's children. Because He is our Father and our Shepherd, He helps us. This faith must stand firm in us. By this faith we can live.

Matthew chapter 14 speaks of these two aspects together: that Jesus went away to pray, and that Jesus bestowed the power of miracles and wonders. He showed us both of these aspects. Jesus is man and also God. He is God, yet He came as our Savior. He is the Lamb of God who came to remove our sins, and He was the sacrificial offering. He possessed both of these natures. I hope that you will know this, believe it, rely on Him, and live by that faith. I have finished delivering the message. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that looks to the Lord above the wind and the waves

< Matthew 14:22-36 >

"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.' When they had crossed over, they came to the land of

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Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well."

The Lord, who obeyed the Father's will through prayer

After performing the miracle of the five loaves and two fish, Jesus put His disciples in the boat first and sent them to the other side. And after sending the multitude away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Jesus is the Son of God and fundamentally God, yet as the Savior who came to this earth in the flesh, He prayed to God the Father.

Jesus' prayer was not like the prayer of a man who lacks power and asks for help. It was the prayer of Jesus, who had put on human flesh to save sinners, to obey the Father's will completely. The death of John the Baptist showed that the time was drawing near for Jesus Himself to die on the cross. The Lord knew the suffering of the flesh, but He set His heart on accomplishing the Father's will.

Believers also need prayer. Prayer is not a method of forcing our own desires on God. It is the time in which we seek what God's will is and receive the strength and faith to follow that will. When hardship arises while we serve the gospel, we must not cling only to our own thoughts but ask help of the living Lord and set our hearts before the will of God.

Storms come even on the path of obedience

The disciples obeyed Jesus' word and crossed toward the other side by boat. But the wind was contrary and the waves rose high, and they suffered greatly. It was not because they had taken a wrong path that they met the storm. Storms can arise even on the path of obeying the Lord's word.

People easily think that if they follow God's will, everything will immediately go smoothly. But on the path of faith, too, there are tribulations and hardships. We may be misunderstood and opposed because we believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and unexpected problems may arise while we serve the gospel together with the church.

We must not conclude that our path is wrong merely because there is a storm. We must first confirm whether we are following the Lord's word. If we are following the Word, then even if our circumstances are hard, it does not mean the Lord has forsaken us. Through that storm He makes us lay down the heart that relied on human strength and teaches us to believe in God.

The Lord could have blocked the wind from the beginning so that the disciples would not meet the storm. But He let them pass through the hardship and then came to them on the water. This was so that the disciples would rely not on their own experience but on Jesus, and learn that He is God, who rules over nature.

The disciples, who did not recognize the Lord in the darkness

In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to His disciples walking on the sea. The Lord had not been unaware of His

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disciples' suffering, arriving only belatedly. Even while praying on the mountain, He knew their situation, and He came near to them at the time they needed Him most.

But the disciples took Jesus, who was coming to save them, for a ghost, and cried out in fear. When their hearts were seized by the storm and the darkness, they could not recognize even the Lord before their eyes. Fear makes problems look bigger than they are and makes us mistake the Lord who helps us for a threat.

Faith is not denying the situation as if it did not exist. Just as the wind and the waves were truly fierce, the problems believers meet are also real. But faith is believing that the Lord, who is greater than the problem, is with us, and that He is God, who rules even the sea and the wind.

The Lord's voice heard in the midst of fear

When the disciples cried out in fear, Jesus immediately made Himself known and told them to take heart and not be afraid. The Lord did not first still the storm; He let them hear His voice. Before the circumstances changed, He led them to believe who He is.

The believer's peace does not come only after every problem has disappeared. Even in the storm, when we hear the Lord's word, our hearts can gain peace. Though the circumstances still shake, if we believe that the Lord is with us and is holding on to us, we are not ruled by fear.

The surest way to hear the Lord's voice is to believe the written word of the Scriptures. Feelings and circumstances keep changing, but the word of God does not change. Matthew 28:20 says, "*Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end*

of the age."

Satan shows believers their lack and their failures and deceives them into thinking God has forsaken them. At such a time we cannot win by arguing with Satan on the basis of our own deeds. We must stand on the word of salvation Jesus has completed. The Word—that the Lord has removed all our sins and made us God's children—does not change in any storm.

Peter, who came out of the boat relying on the Word

Peter asked Jesus that, if it was the Lord, He would command him to come on the water. When Jesus said to come, Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. The ground on which Peter could walk on the water was not his courage or his skill in swimming but the word of the Lord.

Water by nature cannot hold up a person's body. But when the Lord's word came, what was impossible by human common sense took place. Faith is not plunging into the impossible on the strength of self-confidence. It is stepping out on the ground of what the Lord has said.

This same faith is needed in a life that follows the Lord's will. Preaching the gospel, serving the church, and laying down one's own desires may look like loss when seen with the thoughts of the flesh. But when we believe that the Lord's word is right and obey, we come to walk a road that cannot be walked by human strength.

In Peter's request there was a heart that wanted to receive the Lord's word. He did not jump into the water at his own will but asked the Lord to command him. An act of faith must have a clear ground in the Word. It is not faith to act recklessly to fulfill

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one's own desire and then to say that God must take responsibility.

The doubt that began when he saw the wind

While Peter was walking with his eyes on Jesus, he stood on the water. But when he saw the wind and became afraid, he began to sink into the water. The wind had been blowing from the beginning. What changed was not the circumstances but the object Peter was looking at.

Faith is shaken not merely because problems suddenly come into being. It is because the heart's gaze moves from the Lord's word to one's own circumstances. If we keep looking only at our lack and the world's threats, the Lord's power and promises look small in our hearts.

It is the same with the faith of the remission of sin. If we look at our own conduct rather than the word of the gospel, we feel as if there were sin in our hearts again. Looking at yesterday's and today's failures, we doubt, asking how someone like us could be righteous. But the remission of sin was not accomplished because our conduct was good; it was accomplished because Jesus removed all our sins.

The saving hand stretched out at once

As Peter was sinking into the water, he cried out to the Lord to save him. Jesus immediately stretched out His hand and caught him. The Lord did not wait for Peter to sink completely and swim out by himself. At his cry for help, He stretched out His hand at once.

This word shows that our salvation is not accomplished by human ability. Just as a drowning man cannot pull himself out by his own hair, a sinner cannot lift himself out of sin by his good deeds and prayers of repentance. Salvation is received by believing in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was judged on the cross, shedding His blood and dying, and rose again in three days.

Jesus first saved Peter and then rebuked him for having little faith and doubting. The rebuke was not to cast him away but to teach him faith. The Lord knows our weakness and catches us when we fall. At the same time, He teaches us not to remain in the same doubt but to believe the Word.

When a saved believer falls into difficulty, he too must honestly ask the Lord for help. We must not pretend to be strong or hide the problem, but admit that our faith is being shaken. The Lord does not turn away those who rely on Him, and He raises them up again through the Word and the church.

But we must not make the Lord's constant care a ground for self-indulgence. The Lord who caught Peter asked him why he had doubted. Grace leads us, even when we fail, to believe the complete remission of sin Jesus has already accomplished, and it turns us from unbelief to live with a firmer faith. A saved believer must return to the gospel whenever he stumbles and learn to overcome the same doubt.

Jesus Christ, who is God

When Jesus and Peter got into the boat, the wind ceased. Those in the boat worshiped Jesus and confessed that He was truly the Son of God. Walking on the water and making the wind

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cease showed that Jesus is not a mere prophet or a great man but the Creator God.

John 1:1 says, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."* And John 1:3 says, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."* Jesus is God, who created all things, and therefore He is not subject to the sea and the wind that He made.

We must not look only at the fact that Jesus prayed in the flesh and think of Him as a creature like us. He is God, and He came in the body of a man to save sinners. Jesus, who fed the multitude with five loaves and two fish and walked on the water, is true God; and Jesus, who felt weariness and prayed, is the One who came as true man for us.

That the disciples worshiped Jesus was not a mere expression of thanks. Before the One who rules the sea and the wind, they acknowledged that they were creatures. True faith does not stop at asking Jesus for help; it goes as far as exalting Him as God and entrusting one's life to Him.

God, who saved us through the water and the Spirit

The fact that Jesus is God is very important for believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The death of one human being cannot stand in for the sins of all other people. But because Jesus, who is God, came in the flesh, took on the sins of mankind, and was judged, the perfect righteousness that saves every sinner was accomplished.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of mankind onto His own body. That baptism is the water of salvation by which sin was passed on to

Jesus, and the event in which all the righteousness of God was fulfilled. After that, Jesus carried the sin of the world to the cross and shed His blood, receiving all the punishment of sin.

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross are not two separate events. Because He took on sin through His baptism, He received the judgment of that sin on the cross. And by rising again in three days, He revealed that He is the Son of God and the Savior, who has overcome sin and death.

Whoever believes this gospel does not think that Jesus removed his sins only to a certain degree. He believes that all the sins of his whole life are included in the sin of the world, that those sins were passed on through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, and that the judgment was completely finished on the cross. This is the saving faith that looks to the Lord, who is greater than the storm.

Satan accuses believers, pointing to their lack and calling them sinners again, but the word of God testifies that Jesus has removed sin completely. At that moment we must not sink into our own conduct like Peter looking at the wind, but look to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Whoever believes the righteousness the Lord has accomplished can stand again by faith under any accusation.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the surest ground that holds up a believer in the storm. God became our Father not because we did well but because Jesus removed all our sins. Therefore, even when the flesh is lacking and circumstances are hard, the relationship between the Lord and us is not severed.

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The people who came to the Lord in faith

When Jesus and His disciples arrived at the land of Gennesaret, the people recognized Him and sent word into the surrounding region. They brought all the sick to Jesus and begged that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And all who touched it were healed.

These people did not believe that Jesus' garment itself had mysterious power. They believed that Jesus was the One who could heal their diseases, and they came out with that faith. Faith does not stop at hearing about the Lord; it makes us actually come to the Lord with our own problems.

It is the same with the soul's problem of sin. Having the knowledge that Jesus is the Savior is not enough. We must believe in our hearts the fact that Jesus took on my own sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and received my judgment on the cross. When we accept the word of salvation as our own, the remission of sin is accomplished in our hearts.

The people of Gennesaret also did not leave the sick alone; they brought them to Jesus. Believers who have received the remission of sin must likewise lead the souls around them to the Lord. We cannot wash away a person's sins ourselves, but by preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit we can help him meet the Savior.

The people of Gennesaret did not keep the news about Jesus to themselves. They spread it throughout the region and brought the sick. Faith in the Lord makes us care about the sufferings of others as well. The more we know how great the grace we have received is, the more we go out to find the souls who have not yet met the Lord.

The believer who walks to the end looking to the Lord

The latter half of Matthew chapter 14 teaches that there are storms in the life of faith as well. Even the disciples who obeyed the Lord's word met fierce wind and waves. But Jesus came into the very middle of that storm, and Peter, who followed the Lord's word by faith, walked on the water.

Hardships arise even while we follow the Lord and serve the gospel. The weakness of the flesh is exposed, and we may meet the world's opposition, financial problems, and difficulties in relationships. At such times, if we look only at the wind, our hearts sink; but if we look at Jesus, who is God, we can walk again.

Faith is not thinking that we ourselves are strong. It is believing that we are weak but the Lord is almighty, and that though our thoughts waver, the word of God is true. When we fall, we must at once ask the Lord for help, take hold of the hand He stretches out, and rise again.

The Lord not only saved us from sin; He is also with us in the life that follows salvation. He made us God's children through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, dwells in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and leads us along the way of faith through the church and the Word. Therefore, the believer is not someone crossing the storm alone.

We must not confess Jesus as the Son of God only when our circumstances are calm. Even when the wind is fierce and we cannot see the way ahead, we must believe that Jesus is the Creator God and our Savior. When we pray with that faith and go forward step by step according to the Word, the Lord holds on to us and makes us walk the way of the gospel to the end.

The storm is not the believer's destination. The disciples,

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together with the Lord, finally reached the other side, and there the Lord's work of healing the sick continued. We must not look only at the hardship of the moment and think that everything is over. Even after bringing us through the storm, the Lord wants to preach the gospel through us to yet other souls.

Therefore, we cannot boast of the experience of having walked on the water or of how brave we were. The beginning and the end of faith are both in Jesus. It is the Lord who calls us by the Word, holds us when we sink, gets into the boat with us, and leads us to the destination. Looking to that Lord, we must deliver to the world the gospel of life we have received. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Learn the true faith that entrusts everything to the Lord

< Matthew 14:22-36 >

"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, 'It is a ghost!' And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.' And Peter answered Him and said, 'Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.' So He said, 'Come.' And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God.' When they had crossed over, they came to the land of

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Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well."

Following this afternoon, we now look into the Word again in this evening hour. This afternoon we looked at the passage where the Lord performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. The Lord is One who has power different from us human beings. That is why He could do such a thing. This evening we will look at what follows that event.

The Lord, who came walking on the water

The passage concerns what happened after the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. The Lord blessed the five loaves and two fish and fed a crowd of more than five thousand. And there was still food left over. By then the sun had already set and night had come. While the Lord was sending the multitude away, He urged the disciples to get into the boat first and go to the other side. The passage records it this way: *"Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away" (Matthew 14:22)*. The disciples hurriedly got into the boat and began to row toward the other side.

Then the Lord went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. The passage says, *"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there" (Matthew 14:23)*. The boat

the disciples had boarded was by now far away from land. Then the wind rose fiercely and the waves swept over the boat. Water came into the boat. The disciples were in great distress.

At that very hour, the fourth watch of the night, the darkest time, Jesus came to the disciples walking on the sea. The disciples were greatly startled at the sight. They took it for a ghost and cried out in fear. Then the Lord spoke at once: *"Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27).*

Then Peter answered. He said that if it was really the Lord, He should command him to come to Him on the water. When the Lord said to come, Peter got down out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But as he walked on, he saw the wind and the raging waves. He became afraid and began to sink into the water. Peter cried out for salvation, and the Lord immediately stretched out His hand and caught him. And He said, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31)*

When the Lord and Peter got into the boat, the wind ceased. What must those in the boat have felt? They were beside themselves with astonishment. Was this a dream or reality—how amazed they must have been! They worshiped Jesus and confessed, *"Truly You are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33)*. It was the confession that He was the very Messiah and Savior they had been waiting for.

Jesus is the Creator God, different from us

Brothers and sisters, picture this scene. Jesus was standing on the water. And standing there, He took hold of Peter, who was sinking, and pulled him up. What would happen if you or I stood on water? We would sink straight down. But Jesus was not subject to the constraint of gravity. Was Jesus standing on a little

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boat hidden under the water? Certainly not. This passage clearly teaches us who Jesus is.

Jesus is not a being like us humans. He is the Creator God. Therefore, we must not think of Jesus on the same level as us human beings. The Bible calls Him the Savior. The Savior means the Master who has saved us from sin. Who is our Master? God Himself. And at the same time, He is the Son of the Father. That is why the disciples confessed that He was truly the Son of God.

How, then, did this Creator God save us from sin? Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist. And through that baptism He received all the sins of the world onto His own body. That is what the baptism Jesus received from John is. Then He carried those sins and was judged on the cross, shedding His blood and dying. And in three days He rose again from death. In this way He accomplished our salvation in full. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord of power, who walked on the water, has delivered us from sin through this gospel.

The people of Gennesaret, who came to the Lord in faith

The passage goes on to tell what happened in the land of Gennesaret. When the Lord crossed over, the people of that place recognized Jesus. They sent word throughout the region and brought all the sick to Jesus. And they begged that the sick might only touch the hem of His garment. The passage says, *"As many as touched it were made perfectly well" (Matthew 14:36)*. The faith that came to the Lord and relied on Him healed the sick. This event teaches what it is to rely wholly on the Lord in faith.

This event was brought about to teach faith

Here we must consider one thing more. Why did the Lord not get into the boat together with His disciples? Common sense says they should have traveled together. Yet the Lord sent the disciples ahead by boat. And He Himself went up on the mountain alone and prayed. Then He went to His disciples, who were struggling in the storm, walking on the water. This was something the Lord brought about on purpose, with an intention.

During the three years Jesus was on this earth, He trained His disciples. Eating together, sleeping together, wherever they went—every place was a site of instruction. In the daytime, He showed His power through the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. In the evening, He came to His disciples walking on the water. And He reassured them: Be of good cheer, He said; it is I; do not be afraid. Through this event, the Lord wanted to teach the disciples—and you and me today—what faith is.

The reason Peter could walk on the water

How could Peter walk on the water? It was because there was power in the Lord's word. Peter asked that, if it was the Lord, He would let him walk on the water. When the Lord said to come, he believed that word and stepped out. Stepping out of the boat was itself a great act of faith. He could do it because he relied on the Lord and believed.

But as Peter walked on, he looked at his own situation. He saw the water raging and beating, and he became afraid. At that moment, he began to sink into the water. Jesus was still Peter's Master and God and Savior. Therefore, Jesus was standing on the water. But Peter did not believe to the end; he doubted. That

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is why the Lord said to him, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*

Prayer and faith are one

We pray before the Lord about a matter. We do not pray once or twice and stop. We pray earnestly, entrusting it to the Lord and asking His help. But when does the Lord work? He waits until we have truly entrusted the whole matter to the Lord and until the faith arises in us that the Lord has taken it upon Himself. It is not that the Lord grants everything at once just because we pray. Until we have truly entrusted it, until we truly seek His help, until the faith stands in our hearts that the Lord has taken this matter and will solve it—He withholds His answer.

Prayer and faith cannot be separated. The two are originally one. Faith is relying on God. Prayer is asking God for help. So faith and prayer are the same thing. It does not work by merely pestering God for things. We must pray and entrust the matter to the Lord, and we must have the faith that the Lord takes it and solves it. And the faith that the Lord has already taken it must be in our hearts. Only then do we experience that prayer being answered and the work taking place.

The answer comes when we entrust it wholly to the Lord

At first we sometimes pray halfheartedly. But as we pray, our hearts enter deeply into the matter. We come to know that this thing must surely be accomplished. Then we pray still more earnestly. We realize that this is beyond us and that only the Lord

can take it on. As we keep praying like that, faith arises in our hearts. When the matter passes over to the Lord, and the faith arises that the Lord has taken it, we experience that prayer being answered.

Our problem's passing over to the Lord is like our sins' passing over to the Lord. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He received all our sins onto His own body. Our sins passed over to the Lord in that way. And the Lord carried those sins and was judged on the cross, shedding His blood and dying. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the same when we entrust our problems to the Lord. When we cast on the Lord the burden we cannot carry and believe that He has taken it, our hearts find rest. And that problem is solved by the Lord.

Therefore, we must cast all our burdens on the Lord. It is not accomplished by praying loudly in unison. When we really pray personally, we entrust the matter wholly to the Lord. To entrust it to Him, asking Him to solve it, and to believe that He has taken it—that is faith. Peter did not fully believe in Jesus and did not entrust himself wholly to Him. That is why he sank into the water. This applies to us in exactly the same way.

The Lord always comes to us

The Lord said, *"It is I; do not be afraid."* Here the words *"It is I"* mean: I am your Teacher and your Master. Was I not with you in the daytime? Take heart—it is I; do not be afraid. Truly, the Lord is the One who comes to us at any time, whenever we have a problem. We must know this fact.

And the Lord wants us to pray earnestly. To pray earnestly is not merely to move one's lips. It is to rely on Him with all

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one's heart and all one's being, and to ask the Lord for help entirely. We must weigh whether we can solve the problem we have by our own strength or not. If we cannot do it by our own strength, we must entrust it wholly to the Lord and hand it over. And we must have the faith that the Lord takes it all and solves it. When the faith stands—the faith that entrusts, the faith that He has taken it, the faith that He solves it—we receive the solution of that problem.

Prayer is not bound to form. It is not answered because we speak fluently. When we are truly desperate and earnest, there is no orderly composition. Nothing comes out except, 'Lord, solve this problem; help me.' Even one who begins by speaking in an orderly way ends up like that. The Lord is not One who grants a prayer because someone speaks well.

The language of the righteous is truly simple. It is not complicated. A person who has entered the world of faith is not complicated like that. Even when we pray this way and that and our hearts are not settled, it ends at last in a single sentence: 'Lord, take this matter; solve it; help me.' Why did the Lord, who has all power, nevertheless go up on the mountain by Himself to pray? Because true faith is built up in prayer. True faith arises when we entrust things to God with the heart that says, 'We cannot do this; God must do it,' and when we rely on Him and believe that He does it.

When we pray and entrust things to God for His work

I myself have learned this faith many times while serving the Lord. Let me give one example. We were always short of space for worship and ministry. We had to move many times. To move

so many family members and so much equipment, we needed ample space. But securing such a place was truly difficult. At first, something like resentment even rose in my heart. But I brought this need before the Lord.

This sanctuary building was not for ourselves. It was truly necessary for the kingdom of God and for serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So I entrusted that need to the Lord. And I prayed with the faith that the Lord would surely provide. In the end, God provided that building through one person. Because it was a work that pleased God, He answered in that way. God is the One who can give abundantly.

I did not decide this matter alone. I informed my fellow workers of the situation and asked their opinion. I did not want to use the offerings of the saints according to my own personal will. They looked into it themselves and gladly agreed, and so we proceeded. Even now there remains a loan to repay for it. But we have experienced that when God is pleased, He supplies. In the end, it is God who gave it.

It is the same with how we have widened our place of work even in narrow circumstances. That He has enlarged our tents in many places is all because the Lord was pleased to do it. This is God hearing our prayers and answering us. What will happen from now on if we pray to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit more widely to the whole world? If that work is God's will, then even if we have no ability to accomplish it, God accomplishes it. We must pray to God, entrust it, and believe entirely. Then God works, accomplishes it, and blesses us.

When this blessing comes upon us, we work by that blessing. Then it becomes glory to God, and peace comes to us. This is faith, and this is prayer. The passage teaches us exactly this. Prayer is not for filling our own selfish desires. It is praying in line with God's will and having the faith that God accomplishes

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it. Then God takes you and me and uses us to accomplish His will and blesses us.

Brothers and sisters, faith is not something separate from prayer. Even though we have received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must still learn this faith. It is not enough to say that we believe and leave it at that. If we believe, we must pray. We pray because we believe. Prayer is relying on God. It is asking for help, entrusting the matter, and believing that God accomplishes it. That is prayer, and that is faith.

Let us learn true faith

To teach His disciples, the Lord had them get into the boat first and cross over. Then later He appeared before them walking on the water. And He said, *"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* He meant: if you had believed to the end, you would have walked with Me and gotten into the boat with Me. In other words, He was telling him to believe.

Peter later became a man of truly great faith. It is told that when he was martyred, he said he could not bear to be nailed in the same way as Jesus and asked to be crucified upside down. Because he believed that the place the Lord had gone to prepare—heaven—truly exists, he gladly met martyrdom. If he had not had faith, he would have struggled to be spared. But by faith he willingly suffered martyrdom.

When we truly believe the Lord's word and the Lord's will, and when we pray with that faith, we live experiencing the will of God being accomplished. That is exactly what today's passage teaches. I pray that all of us will receive this Word into our hearts and make true progress in faith and prayer. ✉

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CHAPTER

15

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Matthew Chapter 15

< Matthew 15:1-39 >

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'' When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.' Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without

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understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.' Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat.

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And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' Then His disciples said to Him, 'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala."

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 15 begins with the word that reveals what truly defiles a man, and it continues with the faith of the woman of Canaan, the healing of the sick, and the miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish.

In the first part, religious leaders appear who look clean on the outside but whose hearts are far from God. In the scene that follows, a Gentile woman who was treated as religiously unclean is instead acknowledged for her great faith, as she believes in the compassion of Jesus. At the end, Jesus heals and feeds the sick and hungry multitude.

The center of this chapter, therefore, lies in the fact that outward religious forms do not make a person clean. Man's defilement comes out of his heart, and God's compassion comes upon the person who does not put forward his own qualification but seeks the grace of Jesus.

1. Transgressing the commandment of God by the tradition of the elders (verses 1–6)

The Pharisees and scribes who came from Jerusalem criticized Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands when they ate bread. Washing the hands here does not mean ordinary washing for hygiene but a religious purification rite according to the tradition of the elders.

They did not say that the disciples had transgressed the commandment of God; they rebuked them for transgressing *"the tradition of the elders."* They were treating a religious tradition made and handed down by men as having the same authority as the word of God.

Jesus asked them in return, *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"* And He gave the commandment to honor one's parents as an example. In those days there was a teaching that if a person declared that the property he should have used to support his parents had been given to God, he did not need to help his parents. Under a religious pretext of giving to God, they evaded their responsibility to honor their parents.

Tradition itself is not always wrong. But it becomes a problem when man's tradition is raised above the word of God and becomes a means of justifying disobedience. However devout a custom may look, if it nullifies the word of God, it cannot be called true faith.

2. Honoring God with the lips while the heart is far away (verses 7–9)

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes as *"Hypocrites."* And quoting the word of Isaiah, He said, *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."*

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Hypocrisy is a faith in which the outside and the inside differ. With the lips one exalts God and diligently keeps religious rules, but in the heart one does not love God or obey His Word.

A person can attend worship, pray, give offerings, and keep religious traditions. But if he uses them as a means of displaying his own righteousness or judging others, his heart can grow distant from God. The genuineness of faith is shown not in the splendor of outward forms but in the heart toward God and obedience to His Word.

If people teach the commandments of men as if they were the word of God while their hearts have departed from Him, that worship becomes vain worship. God looks not only at a person's lips but at his heart.

3. What defiles a man is the sin that comes out of the heart (verses 10–20)

Jesus called the multitude and said, *"Hear and understand,"* and then He said that what goes into the mouth does not defile a man, but what comes out of the mouth defiles a man.

The Pharisees who heard this word were offended. When the disciples told Him this, Jesus said that every plant which His heavenly Father had not planted would be uprooted. He also called the Pharisees blind leaders of the blind. When a leader who cannot see spiritually guides others, in the end both fall into a ditch.

When Peter asked Him to explain the meaning of this word, Jesus explained that food enters the stomach and passes out of the body, but the words and deeds that come out of the mouth come from the heart. And He said that out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies.

Jesus was not saying that conduct is unimportant. He was

revealing the fact that the source of evil words and deeds is the heart of man. A person does not become clean merely by keeping outward rules. Hands can be washed, but the heart, from which evil thoughts and desires come, cannot be washed by religious ceremonies.

True change, therefore, does not begin with adorning the outward appearance; it begins with acknowledging the sin of the heart. Religion may take issue with the dirtiness of the hands, but Jesus deals with the sin in the heart of man.

4. The woman of Canaan seeks the compassion of Jesus (verses 21–25)

When Jesus went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, a woman of Canaan came out to Him. The Canaanites were Gentiles outside the covenant relationship with Israel. Yet this woman called Jesus *"O Lord, Son of David"* and pleaded with Him to have mercy on her daughter, who was suffering from demon possession.

At first Jesus did not answer her a word. As the woman kept crying out, the disciples asked Him to send her away. Jesus said that He had been sent first of all to *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

The saving ministry of Jesus, within God's history of salvation, began first toward Israel. But this does not mean that the Gentiles were forever excluded from salvation. In fact, Jesus acknowledged this woman's faith and healed her daughter.

Even in the face of Jesus' silence and the cold response of the disciples, the woman did not withdraw. She worshiped Jesus and pleaded, *"Lord, help me!"* She believed that she could not save her daughter by her own strength and that only Jesus could help her.

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5. The great faith that answered, *"Yes, Lord, yet"* (verses 25–28)

Jesus said that it was not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. To today's readers this can sound very harsh. But the conversation that follows shows that Jesus' purpose was not to insult and cast this woman away. Through this word, what her faith was relying on was brought to light.

The woman did not claim that she deserved to be served. She answered, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* Without rejecting the Lord's word, she believed that the Lord's compassion was sufficient to save her and her daughter.

Her faith was great not because she thought her faith was remarkable. It was because she believed that she had no qualification to put forward but that the grace of Jesus was great. Great faith is not faith that regards oneself as great but faith that regards the Lord's compassion and power as great.

Jesus said, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire,"* and her daughter was healed from that very hour.

The Pharisees who appeared earlier and this woman stand in sharp contrast. The Pharisees had the status of covenant people and religious knowledge, but they stumbled at Jesus' word. This woman, on the other hand, was a Gentile who could claim no qualification, yet she humbled herself and took hold of the compassion of Jesus. Those who looked near were far away in heart, and the woman who looked far away drew near to Jesus by faith.

6. Jesus heals many sick people (verses 29–31)

When Jesus went up on the mountain by the Sea of Galilee and sat down, a great multitude came to Him. The people brought the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many

other sick people, and laid them at Jesus' feet.

Jesus healed them. The mute spoke, the maimed were made whole, the lame walked, and the blind saw. The multitude who saw this marveled and glorified the God of Israel.

Those who laid the sick at Jesus' feet entrusted to the Lord a problem they could not solve by their own strength. People could bring the sick, but they could not heal them. The One who actually restored them was Jesus.

Jesus is the Messiah, who does not turn away from human suffering and accomplishes the restoration of the kingdom of God. Where Jesus came, those who could not see saw, those who could not walk walked, and those who could not speak spoke.

However, this word must not be simplified into a promise that every physical disease will surely be healed now if we believe in Jesus. These healings are signs revealing the compassion and messianic authority of Jesus, and they foreshadow the complete restoration to be accomplished in the kingdom of God.

7. Jesus has compassion on the hungry multitude (verse 32)

Jesus called His disciples and said that He had compassion on the multitude. They had already been with Jesus for three days and had nothing to eat. Jesus said that He would not send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way home.

The compassion of Jesus was not a feeling expressed only in words. The Lord knew that the people were actually starving, and He gave them the food they needed. Jesus did not regard only the soul of man as important while ignoring the needs of the body.

In the earlier part of this chapter, the religious leaders made an issue of who had washed his hands. But Jesus saw who was hungry and sick. Hypocritical religion judges people, but the

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compassion of Jesus heals and feeds them.

8. Feeding four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish (verses 33–39)

The disciples asked where in the wilderness they could get enough bread to fill so great a multitude. Though they had already experienced the miracle of the five loaves and two fish in Matthew chapter 14, they again looked at the lack before their eyes and worried.

Jesus asked the disciples how many loaves they had. They had seven loaves and a few little fish. Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground, took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, and gave them to the disciples. When the disciples distributed them to the multitude, everyone ate their fill.

The men alone who ate numbered four thousand, and counting the women and children, there were even more. After all had eaten, the leftover fragments filled seven large baskets.

The seven loaves and a few fish resemble the five loaves and two fish of chapter 14, but they are separate events. Rather than assigning excessive symbolic meaning to each number, we should pay attention to the compassion of Jesus and His supplying power, which the two events show in common.

The disciples saw what was lacking, but Jesus received that little amount and fed a great crowd. The source of life was not the disciples' ability but Jesus. The disciples did not produce the food; they distributed to the people what they had received from Jesus.

The core meaning of Matthew Chapter 15

In Matthew chapter 15, what looks clean on the outside and what is truly clean before God are distinguished. The Pharisees and scribes strictly kept the rules of hand washing and the

tradition of the elders, yet they nullified the word of God by the tradition of men. They honored God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

Jesus said that man's real problem lies in his heart. Evil thoughts, lies, lewdness, and violence do not come in from outside along with food; they come out of the heart of man. What man needs, therefore, is not to adorn his outward appearance religiously but to have the sins of his heart resolved.

The woman of Canaan was a Gentile who could claim no religious qualification, yet she did not assert her own righteousness but sought the compassion of Jesus. The Lord highly praised her faith. Then Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry multitude, revealing His compassion, which does not turn away those who come to Him.

Religious status and tradition cannot bring a person near to God. The person who acknowledges that sin comes out of his own heart and comes forward relying not on his own qualification but on the grace of Jesus experiences the Lord's compassion.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 15 is the chapter that reveals that the source of what defiles a man is not outward food or rules but the sin of the heart, and that shows that healing and the food of life are abundantly given to the person who lays down his own righteousness and seeks the compassion of Jesus.

2) Matthew Chapter 15 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapter 15 reveals that man's true defilement comes out of his heart, and it teaches that Jesus is the One who

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makes clean and gives life to those defiled by sin.

The Pharisees made an issue of unwashed hands, but Jesus made an issue of the sin that comes out of the heart of man. The woman of Canaan did not put forward her own qualification but held on to the Lord's compassion, and Jesus healed the sick and fed the hungry multitude. Seen at the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this chapter teaches that religious forms cannot wash away the sins of the heart, and that only by believing in the righteousness of God, which Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, can one receive the true remission of sin.

First, there is a point to distinguish in interpretation. There is no need to turn the loaves and fish, the crumbs, and the physical conditions of the sick in Matthew chapter 15 all into detailed symbols of the gospel. The passage speaks of the compassion of Jesus, who actually cared for the hungry multitude and the sick. Yet the themes the whole chapter raises—the sin of the heart, faith, compassion, and the food of life—are clearly connected with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished.

1. Man's tradition cannot wash away the sins of the heart (verses 1–6)

The Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus' disciples for eating bread without washing their hands according to the tradition of the elders. This was not a matter of hygienic hand washing but of a religious purification rite.

They thought that if they washed their hands clean outwardly, they would also be clean before God. But Jesus rebuked them, saying that they were transgressing the commandment of God by the tradition of men. For they were evading the word of God to honor one's parents under a religious pretext.

The same thing can happen before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. People can regard the teachings of their denomination or religious customs, handed down over a long time, as greater than the word of God. Even though God says that He has resolved sin through the baptism of Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection, people may refuse to accept it because it does not fit the tradition men have made.

Man's tradition cannot wash away the sins of the heart. Even if one attends worship, fasts, does good deeds, and repeatedly confesses his sins, those acts themselves cannot remove the sins written on his heart. Man's sin must be resolved not by religious methods men have made but by the way of salvation God has established.

The way of salvation God has established is clear. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in the flesh of man; He received all the sins of mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist; bearing those sins, He shed His blood and was judged on the cross; and He rose again from the dead, completing the salvation of sinners.

Faith, therefore, does not consist in keeping the traditions we have grown used to. It consists in accepting just as it is the work of salvation that God has testified to in His Word.

2. What is needed is not lip religion but faith in the heart (verses 7–9)

Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites and quoted the word of Isaiah: *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."*

To honor God with the lips means to use many religious expressions and to speak words that exalt God. But however much one confesses with his lips that Jesus is the Savior, if sin remains as it is in his heart and he does not believe the

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righteousness God has accomplished, his heart can be far from God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a doctrine to be recited with the lips only. It is the gospel of believing in one's heart that Jesus received all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, that He received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and that He rose again and made me righteous.

If someone says with his lips, "Jesus has remitted all my sins," while believing in his heart that sin still remains, his words and his faith do not agree. If God has said that He removed all sins, the believer must trust that Word more than his own feelings or deeds.

True worship does not begin with striving to wash away one's own sins. It begins with believing in the heart the salvation the Lord has already accomplished and giving thanks. The person who has received the grace of the remission of sin does not boast of himself but exalts the righteousness God has accomplished.

3. The sins that defile a man come out of the heart (verses 10–20)

Jesus said, *"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."* And He explained that out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies.

Man does not become a sinner by accident, because of his environment; he is by nature a being with a heart that produces sin. People harbor evil thoughts, lie, and fall into lewdness and greed because there is a sinful disposition in their hearts.

Man is not a being who can become clean by slightly

correcting his outward conduct. He can wash his hands and correct wrong habits to some degree, but he cannot fundamentally remove, by his own effort, the sin that keeps coming out of his heart. Only when a person discovers sin ceaselessly coming out of his own heart and completely denies his own righteousness and ability does he come to rely solely on the grace of salvation God has given.

Many religions teach people to live better, not to sin, and to repent again when they have sinned. Of course, it is necessary to acknowledge one's wrongs, turn back, and live rightly. But that cannot be the ground of the remission of sin. The act of a person confessing his sins and the saving work of God actually removing sins must be distinguished.

Jesus received baptism in order to take on all the sins that come out of our hearts. In that baptism the Lord received from John is contained the righteousness of God, by which He took on all the sins of the world—not only the sins we have already committed but even the sins we will commit in our weakness.

Because Jesus received the sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He received the punishment of those sins on the cross. The blood of the cross is the proof that He paid in full the judgment of the sins He had taken on. And Jesus rose again from the dead, revealing that His salvation is complete.

The sins of the heart, therefore, are not resolved by the rite of washing hands or by repeated religious acts. When we believe in our hearts in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, we receive the remission of sin that God has accomplished. We become righteous not because evil thoughts no longer come out of our hearts at all, but because Jesus took on all those sins and was judged for them.

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4. The spiritually blind cannot lead people to the remission of sin (verses 12–14)

The Pharisees were offended when they heard Jesus' word. Jesus said that they were blind leaders of the blind. If the blind leads the blind, both fall into a ditch.

The spiritually blind does not mean only those who have no knowledge of the Scriptures. The Pharisees and scribes knew the Scriptures well and held religious authority. But they did not know how the sins that come out of a person's heart are resolved. They taught outward rules, but they could not lead people to the way of the remission of sin.

Today as well, if a religious leader does not fully know the saving work of Jesus, he cannot set people free from the sins of their hearts. If he preaches the blood of the cross but cannot explain why Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, it remains unclear when and how sin was passed on to Jesus.

As a result, people believe in Jesus for a long time and still confess that they have sin in their hearts, and they try to wash those sins away daily by their own deeds. They come to say that Jesus removed all sins while at the same time believing that they themselves are still sinners.

A true guide of the gospel is not a person who binds people to his own denomination and tradition. He is a person who accurately preaches the righteousness of God, which Jesus completed through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection, and so helps people believe that Word and receive the remission of the sins of their hearts.

5. The woman of Canaan held on to the Lord's compassion, not her own qualification (verses 21–24)

The woman of Canaan was a Gentile, yet she called Jesus *"O Lord, Son of David"* and pleaded with Him to have mercy on her

demon-possessed daughter. Jesus did not answer her a word at first, and He said that He had been sent first of all to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

God's history of salvation was promised first to Israel and was proclaimed to the world through them. But this does not mean that the grace of Jesus was limited to Israel. Jesus in the end praised the faith of this Gentile woman and healed her daughter.

The woman did not withdraw even before Jesus' silence. Nor did she hide her circumstances. She revealed plainly that her daughter was severely demon-possessed and pleaded, *"Lord, help me!"*

The gospel of the water and the Spirit likewise becomes good news to the person who acknowledges his true self before God. A person who thinks he has little sin and can live righteously with a little effort finds it hard to realize why Jesus had to take on all sins.

But the person who admits that evil thoughts, desires, and lies keep coming out of his own heart comes to know how desperately he needs the Lord's salvation. He does not put forward his own righteousness but comes to Jesus with the heart that says, 'Unless the Lord saves me, I cannot live.'

6. The confession *"Yes, Lord, yet"* is great faith (verses 25–28)

Jesus said that it was not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. This word sounds very stern. But through that process the woman's faith was clearly revealed.

The woman did not insist that she deserved to be served. She answered, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* She acknowledged that the Lord's judgment was right, and yet she did not give up on the

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Lord's compassion.

Faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit also begins with acknowledging, *"Yes, Lord."* When God says that all people are sinners and must be judged, we must acknowledge that it is right. Though in my own thoughts I may look better than others, if God says that what comes out of my heart is sin, His judgment is right.

But faith does not end with the fact that I am a sinner deserving judgment. After *"Yes, Lord, yet,"* it takes hold of the Lord's grace. I have no righteousness of my own, but I believe that Jesus received my sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, that He paid the wages of my sins on the cross, and that He rose again and saved me.

The faith of the woman of Canaan was great not because her willpower was strong. It was because she saw her own qualification as small and the Lord's compassion as great. Great faith is not faith that regards oneself as remarkable but faith that believes the Lord's grace is sufficient even though one has no merit at all.

Jesus praised the woman's faith and said, *"Let it be to you as you desire,"* and from that very hour her daughter was healed. In the Lord's word there is power that actually saves and restores.

7. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles (verses 21–28)

God's compassion crossed the boundary of nations and came even to the woman of Canaan. She was not an Israelite, yet she believed in Jesus and received grace.

The sins Jesus took on through the baptism He received from John the Baptist are not the sins of the Israelites only. They are the sins of everyone in the world. The judgment the Lord received on the cross was not for one particular nation but for

the sins of all mankind.

Therefore, whoever believes in his heart the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished can receive the remission of sin. One's nationality, social position, level of education, and past sins do not determine salvation. The person who acknowledges his sins and believes in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection receives the grace of God.

Outwardly, the woman of Canaan was outside the covenant, but in her heart she believed in the compassion of Jesus. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had the status of covenant people and religious tradition, but their hearts were far from God. God looks not at a person's outward appearance or religious background but at the faith of the heart.

8. The healing of the sick shows the authority of Jesus, who restores sinners (verses 29–31)

The people brought the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many other sick people, and laid them at Jesus' feet. Jesus healed them, and the multitude who saw it glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus is the One who truly has compassion on the sick and possesses the authority to heal. Each disease must not be arbitrarily defined as the symbol of some particular sin. Nor should we judge that a person has sinned more than others because he is ill.

But applied to the gospel, the helpless state of these sick people makes us think of the fact that man under sin cannot save himself. A sinner cannot see the righteousness of God by his own strength, cannot come to God rightly, and cannot resolve the sin of his own heart.

Just as the people laid the sick at Jesus' feet, the sinner must lay himself down before the Lord. It is not that I heal myself by

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living well; Jesus must save me. Through the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection, the Lord makes sinners righteous, reconciles them to God, and makes them live in new life.

The healing of the body is a sign showing that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not promise that every physical disease of every believer will be healed right now. What this gospel certainly gives to everyone who believes is the remission of sin and eternal life, and in the end the hope of enjoying a resurrected body and complete restoration.

9. The seven loaves and a few fish show the heart of the Lord, who does not send the hungry away (verses 32–39)

Jesus looked at the multitude that had been with Him for three days and said, *"I have compassion on the multitude."* Knowing that they would faint on the way if He sent them away hungry, He said that He would not do so.

The heart of Jesus, who had compassion on the hungry multitude, is the heart of the Shepherd, who does not abandon even those exhausted under sin and death. He is the Shepherd of love, who knows our needs and gives us the food of life.

All the disciples had were seven loaves and a few little fish. The grace God bestows is perfect, unlimited, and never exhausted. Human righteousness and ability have limits, but the food of life and the grace of salvation that Jesus Christ gives lack nothing even after giving life to every soul in the world.

Applied to the gospel, this food represents the word of the gospel that gives life to souls starved by sin. Man's philosophy and religious teachings cannot completely resolve the sins of the heart. Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the

cross, and the resurrection, is the true food that gives sinners the remission of sin and eternal life.

The disciples did not produce the food. They distributed to the multitude what they had received from Jesus. Those who preach the gospel are likewise not people who invent a new way of salvation with their own wisdom. They are people who receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which the Lord has already completed, and deliver it just as it is.

The salvation Jesus accomplished is not insufficient. The Lord did not take on only part of our sins. Through the baptism He received from John, He received all the sins of the world passed on to Him; bearing those sins, He received the judgment of all sins on the cross; and He rose from the dead, accomplishing complete salvation. This gospel is the food of life that fills all who believe with the remission of sin and still lacks nothing.

The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 15 conveys

Matthew chapter 15 reveals that man's real problem is not outward defilement but the sin that comes out of his heart. A person can wash his hands, keep religious rules, and keep his outward appearance neat, but he cannot thereby remove the evil thoughts, desires, and lies of his heart.

What man needs, therefore, is not outward religious ceremony but the salvation of Jesus, who actually resolved the sins of the heart. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus received all the sins that come out of our hearts passed on to Him. Bearing those sins, the Lord shed His blood and was judged on the cross, and He rose again from the dead and saved us completely.

This gospel enters not the person with much self-

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righteousness but the person who humbles himself like the woman of Canaan, saying, *"Yes, Lord, yet."* It is not claiming that one deserves to be saved; it is believing that although I am a sinner deserving judgment, the righteousness and compassion of Jesus are sufficient to save me.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has not become clean because his own conduct is perfect. He has become a righteous person without sin before God because Jesus took on all his sins and ended their judgment. He does not boast of himself, and like the Lord, who fed the hungry multitude, he lives sharing the gospel of life with other souls.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 15 is the chapter that shows that Jesus received all the sins of the heart that defile a man passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and resolved them completely by the cross and the resurrection, and that whoever lays down his own righteousness and believes in this righteousness and compassion of God receives the remission of sin and the food of eternal life. ✉

Matthew Chapter 15

The sins of the heart that defile a man can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

Matthew chapter 15 begins with a question from the Pharisees and scribes who came from Jerusalem. They made an issue of Jesus' disciples eating bread without washing their hands according to the tradition of the elders. But Jesus rebuked them instead, saying that they were transgressing the commandment of God by putting man's tradition first. Evading even the commandment to honor one's parents under the name of Corban, they were, as Isaiah prophesied, people who honored God with their lips while their hearts were far away from Him.

Jesus called the multitude and taught that what defiles a man is not what goes into the mouth but what comes out of it. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies, and these defile a man. The religious rite of washing hands cannot wash the sins of the heart in the least. Man's true problem is not outward dirtiness but the sin in his heart, and this sin cannot be resolved by man's tradition or works.

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Then Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon, and a woman of Canaan cried out for her severely demon-possessed daughter, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!"* When Jesus said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs,"* the woman answered, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* To this answer, which did not put forward her own qualification in the least but held on to the Lord's compassion to the end, Jesus said, *"Great is your faith,"* and her daughter was healed.

After that, Jesus sat on a mountain by the Sea of Galilee, and a great multitude came, bringing the lame, the maimed, the blind, and the mute. When Jesus healed them all, the multitude glorified the God of Israel. Jesus also had compassion on the multitude that had been with Him three days with nothing to eat; He gave thanks over seven loaves and a few little fish and fed four thousand men, besides women and children, until they were filled. Jesus is the One who does not send away hungry those who come to Him.

The way to actually resolve the sins of the heart is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist; bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the cross, receiving all the judgment; and He rose from death, overcoming the power of sin and death. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes clean not because his own conduct is perfect, but because Jesus took on and removed all the sins of his heart. This gospel enters the person who humbles himself like the woman of Canaan rather than the person with much self-righteousness.

Man's tradition and outward religious ceremonies cannot wash the sins of the heart; only the salvation Jesus has completed

The sins of the heart that defile a man
can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

makes a person clean. Now, as we look at the passage in order, we will consider the reality of the sin that defiles a man, and the compassion of Jesus, who washes that sin away, heals the sick, and feeds the hungry multitude.

What defiles a man is not unwashed hands but the sin that comes out of the heart, and that sin can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'' When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.' Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly

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Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'" (Matthew 15:1–20)

The Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus' disciples for not washing their hands according to the tradition of the elders before eating bread. Washing the hands here was not ordinary washing for hygiene but a religious rite believed to make a person clean. Jesus was not opposing hygienic hand washing; He was rebuking the wrong of exalting a man-made rite above the word of God.

Tradition itself is not always wrong. There can be good order and customs that help the life of faith. But if man's tradition replaces the word of God or nullifies the meaning of the Word, it must be discarded. The standard of faith must be the written word of God, not an old custom or the claim of a famous religious leader.

Jesus gave the commandment to honor one's parents as an example. God said, *"Honor your father and your mother,"* but the religious leaders of that day taught that if a person declared that what should have gone to his parents had been offered to God, he did not need to care for them. Outwardly it looked like devotion to God, but in reality it was a religious excuse for evading God's commandment.

The sins of the heart that defile a man
can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

To neglect one's parents or abandon one's rightful responsibility in the name of serving God is not true faith. Faith is not a means of cleverly evading God's command but following His will by faith. However holy an act may look religiously, if it nullifies the word of God, God is not pleased with it.

Jesus called them *"Hypocrites."* Hypocrisy is the state of appearing to serve God well outwardly while the heart has departed far from Him. Even if one praises God with his lips and performs many religious ceremonies, if he does not believe the word of God in his heart, that worship becomes vain worship.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the representative error of following the commandments of men is trying to wash away sin by human effort. People may think that if they offer many prayers of repentance, accumulate good deeds and service, and keep religious rules, they will gradually become holy and be saved. But such works may tidy the outward appearance; they cannot remove the sins written on the heart.

Jesus said, *"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."* Food enters the body and is passed out of the body. It is not food or unwashed hands that produce murder, adultery, and greed in a person's soul. What makes a person unclean before God is the sin already in his heart.

Man does not become a sinner only when he commits sins. Because he is born with a sinful nature as a descendant of Adam, he commits sins. As the fruit comes out according to the life within the tree, so evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies come out because sin is in the heart of man.

People may think themselves good because they have not actually murdered or committed adultery. But God examines not

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only the results revealed in action but even the thoughts of the heart. In hatred and anger there is the nature of murder; in lust there is the nature of adultery; and in coveting what belongs to another there is the nature of theft. Standing before the word of God, we cannot but admit that all kinds of sin are in our hearts.

The Law exposes the sin in a person's heart, but it cannot wash that sin away. Dirty hands can be washed with water, but the sins written on the heart cannot be washed with the water of this world or by human discipline. Since the wages of sin is death, that sin must be passed on to another in a lawful way, and its judgment must be carried out.

That is why Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in the flesh of man. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body the sin inherited from Adam and all the sins we commit throughout our lives. And bearing the sin of the world, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of that sin, and He rose again in three days. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which makes the heart of man clean from all sins.

The baptism of Jesus is connected with the laying on of hands in the Old Testament. Just as a sinner in the Old Testament laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass his sins onto it and then made the offering shed its blood, so Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind. Therefore, the blood He shed on the cross was not a meaningless death that had taken on no sin; it became the blood of judgment that bore the punishment of our sins in our place.

The person who believes this gospel accepts the salvation Jesus has already accomplished instead of striving to make his heart clean by his own deeds. He believes, 'In my heart there are evil thoughts and all kinds of sins, but Jesus took on all those

The sins of the heart that defile a man
can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

sins through His baptism and was judged for them on the cross.' To the person who receives the remission of sin by this faith, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Even after receiving the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, lack and evil thoughts can still appear in the flesh. But the born-again person does not claim that his flesh is righteous. While admitting the evil of the flesh, he believes the Word that Jesus has washed away all sins completely. And, led by the Holy Spirit who dwells in his heart, he seeks to live not according to the desires of the flesh but according to the will of God.

The disciples worried that the Pharisees had been offended at Jesus' word. But Jesus said that every plant which His heavenly Father had not planted would be uprooted. The traditions of men and false doctrines may hold their place within religion for a long time, but in the end they are all exposed and removed before the word of God.

Jesus said that the Pharisees and scribes were blind leaders of the blind. The spiritually blind does not mean only those who have no knowledge of the Bible. A person who teaches the Scriptures and yet does not know why sin is in the heart of man and how Jesus removed that sin is spiritually blind. If people follow such a leader, both the leader and the followers fall into the ditch of judgment without receiving the remission of sin.

Therefore, whoever's teaching we follow, we must examine whether it agrees with the word of God. A doctrine of a famous denomination or a long tradition does not automatically become the truth. If someone teaches that sins were washed away by the blood of the cross alone, apart from the baptism of Jesus, or that one's sins are washed again only by daily prayers of repentance, he is not delivering in full the salvation Jesus has completed.

True worship is not offered with the lips and outward

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ceremonies alone. It is acknowledging the word of God in the heart and believing the salvation Jesus completed by the water and the Spirit. The person who has received the remission of sin by this faith seeks to honor his parents, love his neighbors, and live honestly. Such conduct is not a condition for obtaining salvation but the fruit of faith that appears out of gratitude for the salvation already received.

Therefore, before judging the outward appearance of others like the Pharisees, we must examine by the Word what is in our own hearts. We must admit that we are beings who cannot but sin, and believe not the teachings of men but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished. It is not unwashed hands but the sins of the heart that defile a man, and the only way to wash away all those sins is to believe in Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

Great faith is the faith that does not put forward one's own qualification but holds on to the Lord's word and compassion to the end

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs

The sins of the heart that defile a man
can be washed away only by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matthew 15:21–28)

Jesus went into the region of Tyre and Sidon, and there a woman of Canaan came out and asked Him for help. The woman of Canaan was a Gentile outside the covenant of Israel. She had no religious qualification—neither descent from Abraham nor membership in the people who kept the Law. Yet it was precisely this woman who received from Jesus the praise, *"Great is your faith."*

The woman called Jesus *"O Lord, Son of David."* This means that she recognized Jesus not merely as a man of power who healed diseases but as the Messiah whom God had promised to send as the descendant of David. Many Israelites in those days saw Jesus' miracles and still did not believe in Him, but this Gentile woman believed that Jesus was the promised Savior.

She did not pray, "Have mercy on my daughter"; she pleaded, *"Have mercy on me."* For she had taken her daughter's suffering as her own. True love does not watch another's pain from a distance but embraces it as one's own problem. This woman acknowledged her own inability to solve her daughter's problem and came to Jesus.

For a person to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he must first know his own spiritual condition. Man is born with sin as a descendant of Adam, and out of his heart come evil thoughts, greed, lewdness, hatred, and lies. By his own efforts and religious zeal he cannot remove this root of sin. Like the woman of Canaan, he must admit that he is a being who can only plead for God's grace, saying, 'Lord, have mercy on me.'

When Jesus at first said nothing, the woman did not

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withdraw. The Lord's silence did not mean that He hated her or was unwilling to save her. In the end, that silence became the process that revealed how much she trusted Jesus and whether she was holding on to the Lord Himself rather than to people's responses. Faith is not doubting the goodness of the Lord even when no answer is immediately visible.

The disciples regarded the woman's cries as a nuisance and asked Jesus to send her away. But Jesus did not drive her out. People easily judge by outward appearance and status whether someone deserves help, but the Lord looks at the center of a person. Those who preach the gospel must likewise never exclude anyone in advance on the ground of nationality, status, or past and present appearance.

Jesus said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* This expresses the order of the history of redemption: the salvation God promised is accomplished first through Israel. But it does not mean that the salvation of Jesus is limited to Israel. Jesus finally commanded that the gospel be preached to all nations, and through the woman of Canaan the way of salvation was shown in advance, by which Gentiles also receive God's grace through faith.

The woman worshiped Jesus and pleaded again, *"Lord, help me!"* She did not act like a person with the right to demand. Nor did she insist that Jesus must do as she wished. She believed that although she had no merit at all, Jesus had the power and the compassion to save her and her daughter.

Jesus said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."* This word did not mean that He regarded the woman's person and nation as worthless. It was a word that laid bare the fact that a Gentile outside the covenant had no religious qualification to present before God. It was also a word that made clear whether the woman would put forward

her own qualification or wholly seek the Master's compassion.

The woman answered, *"Yes, Lord."* She did not retort or grow angry because the Lord's word sounded unfavorable to her. If God said she was a sinner, she acknowledged that she was a sinner; if He said she had no merit, she accepted it as it was. The starting point of great faith is not asserting that one's own thoughts are right but acknowledging that God's judgment is right.

Yet the woman did not despair there. She said, *"Even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table,"* holding on to the abundant grace of the Master. She could not claim the qualification of a child, but she believed that the Lord's grace was more than enough to solve her problem and her daughter's. She did not look for hope in herself; she found hope in the compassion and power of Jesus.

We who stand before the gospel of the water and the Spirit are like this woman. No one can present his good deeds, prayers, or religious career before God. But Jesus, the Son of God, took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world—Jews and Gentiles alike—through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And He received the judgment of all those sins on the cross and rose again from the dead.

The sin of the world that Jesus took on includes the sins of the woman of Canaan and the sins of each one of us. Because He received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and paid the wages of sin in full on the cross, whoever believes this fact receives the remission of sin. Salvation is not the exclusive possession of Israelites or of the morally good; it is God's gift given to everyone who acknowledges his sinfulness and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus said, *"O woman, great is your faith!"* Her faith was

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great not merely because she cried out for a long time. It was because she knew Jesus rightly as the Messiah and Lord, acknowledged that she had no qualification, accepted the Lord's word as right, and yet trusted His compassion to the end. Great faith is not faith that regards oneself as great but faith that regards the grace and power of Jesus as great.

When Jesus said, *"Let it be to you as you desire,"* the woman's daughter was healed from that very hour. Jesus did not go in person to where the daughter was or perform any special rite. At one word of the Lord, the power of the terrible demon departed. Jesus is the Son of God, who rules the evil spirits without being limited by distance or circumstances.

This word is not a teaching that God will certainly grant every human wish if only we demand persistently. The woman's faith was not a technique for moving God to fulfill her own desires; it was faith that acknowledged her helplessness and entrusted herself to the Lord's compassion. Our prayers, too, must not force our own will but ask for help believing that the Lord is good and works in the most right way.

Therefore, we must not put forward our denomination, good deeds, or religious zeal as qualifications for salvation. We must acknowledge that the world's wealth, honor, and human ability cannot save us, and come to Jesus. Like the woman of Canaan, we must accept the word of God as right and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes that the Lord's grace is greater than his own lack receives the remission of sin and eternal life.

Just as Jesus completely restored the sick who could not be cured, He makes the souls of sinners new through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matthew 15:29–31)

After healing the daughter of the woman of Canaan, Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down. Then a great multitude came to Him, bringing all kinds of sick people. The compassion shown to one woman of Canaan now appeared widely to countless sick people. The grace and power of Jesus are not limited to any particular person or nation.

The multitude laid the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many other sick people at Jesus' feet. Among the sick there were those who could not walk to Jesus by themselves. They came to Jesus with the help of family or neighbors. Love that flows from faith does not turn away from the suffering but brings them to the Lord.

Those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit must do the same work as this multitude. We must not blame or abandon those who have lost spiritual strength because of sin and do not know the truth. We must help them with love so that they can hear the word of the gospel and meet Jesus. We cannot wash away a person's sins ourselves, but we can lead him to Jesus, who washes sins away.

That the sick were laid at Jesus' feet makes us think that their

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problems were entrusted wholly to the Lord. They were problems hard to solve by human medicine and effort, but the people believed that Jesus had the power to heal them. It is the same with the problem of sin. Man cannot remove the sins of his heart by his own resolve, good deeds, and religious zeal, so he must bring all his sins to Jesus.

The physical disabilities in this passage must not be interpreted as punishment for the personal sins of those individuals. Nor are people with disabilities more sinful or less valuable than others. Jesus did not condemn or despise the sick; He had compassion on them and healed them. Every person is a precious being created in the image of God.

Yet this healing event makes us think of the state of man, who has lost his spiritual functions because of sin. Man has become spiritually blind and cannot see the righteousness of God; not knowing the truth, he cannot speak the gospel rightly either. He has no strength to walk according to the word of God, and no ability to resolve his own sins. Just as the sick of the body came to Jesus with the help of others, the sinner also needs people who deliver the gospel to him, and the grace of God.

The spiritually blind does not mean only those who have never read the Bible. A person may know the Scriptures well and say that he believes in Jesus, and still fail to see how He took on our sins. If he knows only the cross of Jesus and does not know the meaning of the baptism He received beforehand, he cannot clearly explain how the sin of the world was passed on to Him.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received the sins of everyone in the world onto His own body. And bearing those sins, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin, and He rose again in three days. Through Jesus' baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, the righteousness of God that saves sinners from all

sins and judgment was completed.

Jesus healed the many sick people who came to Him. The maimed were made whole, the lame walked, the blind saw, and the mute spoke. The salvation of Jesus is not an incomplete salvation that heals only part of the sinner and leaves the rest. The Lord washes away all the sins written on the sinner's heart and establishes him as a complete righteous person before God.

The sins Jesus took on through the baptism He received from John include our original sin and personal sins, the sins committed in heart and in deed, and the sins of the past, the present, and the future. Because He received the punishment of all those sins on the cross, whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the complete remission of sin. Even if his own lack keeps appearing, he can believe on the ground of the word of God that he has become a righteous person without sin.

For the spiritually blind to be healed means to come to see and understand the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the word of God. For the spiritually mute to be healed makes us think of believing the salvation Jesus accomplished and testifying to it with the mouth. For the one who could not walk spiritually to be healed means beginning to live according to the word of God, led by the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean, however, that a born-again person suddenly becomes physically perfect and skilled in everything. Lack and weakness remain even after receiving the remission of sin. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit leads the believer's heart to live a life of preaching the gospel, loving his neighbors, and serving—things he could not do before. This is not human excellence but the result of the new life the Lord has given.

The multitude marveled at Jesus' healing and glorified the God of Israel. The result of true salvation lies not in exalting man

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but in giving glory to God. We must exalt not the ability of the person who preached the gospel or of the church, but the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, who saved sinners.

This healing event must not be interpreted as a promise that every physical disease will surely be healed at once if we believe in Jesus. We may pray to God for healing and should also receive proper treatment, but the center of the passage is the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, who rules over disease, sin, and death. Even when the diseases of the body are healed, we die someday; but the eternal life received by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit never passes away.

Therefore, we must acknowledge our spiritual helplessness and come to the feet of Jesus. We must also preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the souls who cannot yet see the gospel, cannot speak it, and cannot walk by faith. Just as Jesus healed the sick laid at His feet, whoever believes in His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection is washed of all his sins, opens his spiritual eyes, and lives testifying to the grace of God.

Jesus had compassion on the hungry multitude and distributed the abundant food of life through His disciples

"Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' Then His disciples said to Him, 'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on

the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala." (Matthew 15:32–39)

After healing many sick people, Jesus called His disciples and said that He had compassion on the multitude. The multitude had already been with Jesus for three days, and no food was left. Jesus looked into their situation before the people even asked. The Lord's compassion is the love that attends in detail not only to the soul of man but even to the weakness of the body.

Jesus knew that if He sent the multitude away hungry, they might faint on the way. The Lord did not call people, give them only words, and then pretend not to know their practical hardships. As the Creator of the body, He also knew that human beings need food and rest. This teaches that those who believe the gospel must not speak only of the salvation of the soul while ignoring the actual needs of their suffering neighbors.

The multitude did not stay with Jesus for three days because they had plenty to eat. They remained there because they counted the word and power of Jesus more precious than the food of the body. Those who hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit must likewise put the problem of their soul's sin first. For obtaining the remission of all sins and eternal life is a greater blessing than gaining the wealth and success of this world.

The disciples said, *"Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?"* They had already experienced the miracle in which Jesus fed a great crowd with five loaves and two fish, yet they looked again at the

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circumstances before their eyes. Even after experiencing God's grace, people easily forget the grace they received and start calculating their own resources when they meet a new difficulty.

The wilderness makes us think of this world, where man cannot produce the food of life by his own ability. The world's philosophy, religion, and human wisdom may comfort people for a while, but they cannot remove the sins of the heart or give eternal life. The only true food that can fill souls starved by sin is Jesus Christ and the gospel He has completed.

Jesus asked the disciples, *"How many loaves do you have?"* The Lord did not let them look only at what they lacked but made them confirm what they presently had. Seven loaves and a few little fish were far from enough to feed so many people, but when they were offered into the hands of Jesus, they became abundant food.

It is not only with many talents and possessions that we can do God's work. Our wisdom and strength are small, but we can offer them to the Lord in faith. The power to preach the gospel comes not from a person's eloquence or ability but from the gospel of the water and the Spirit itself, which is being preached.

Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. To receive the food, they first had to stop running about trying to obtain something by their own strength and wait for what the Lord would give. It is the same with the remission of sin. Man must lay down the attempt to remove his sins by his own good deeds, prayers of repentance, and religious merits, and receive by faith the salvation Jesus has completed.

Jesus took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples distributed them to the multitude. The One who made the food was Jesus, and the disciples delivered what they had received from the Lord. Today's preacher of the gospel is likewise not a person who

produces his own teaching but a person who shares just as it is the food of salvation the Lord has given in the word of the Scriptures.

The food of life that gives life to the soul is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of everyone in the world upon His own body. And bearing those sins, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin, and He rose again in three days. Whoever believes this fact of salvation is washed of all his sins and receives eternal life.

The baptism of Jesus and the cross must not be separated. Just as the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament received sins through the laying on of hands and then shed its blood, so Jesus received the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John and then was judged on the cross. The blood of the cross is the blood of judgment by which Jesus paid in full the price of our sins He had already taken on.

The multitude all ate their fill of the food the disciples distributed. It was not that some ate a little and others starved; all the people there ate enough. The salvation of Jesus is neither partial nor insufficient. The Lord did not wash away only some sins and leave the rest for man to solve by himself.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is washed of all his sins—not only those of the past but those of the present and the future as well. For Jesus took on the whole sin of the world and received its judgment completely. This salvation is sufficient for everyone in the world, but the one who actually enjoys its grace is the one who believes in his heart what God has done. As prepared food fills only those who eat it, so the completed gospel gives the remission of sin only when it is received into the heart.

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Even after the people had eaten their fill, the leftover fragments filled seven large baskets. In the Scriptures the number seven makes us think of God's perfection, but the center of this event is not the number itself; it is the fact that the Lord's grace is abundant enough to feed everyone and still overflow. However many people believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God's salvation never runs short.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit, therefore, is not food needed by only one nation or one age. It is the food of life equally necessary for those with many sins and those who seem to have few, for the learned and the unlearned alike. The saving work of Jesus is sufficient to take on all the sins of the world, and whoever believes this gospel can receive the complete remission of sin.

The miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish must not be interpreted only as a promise that believing in Jesus always brings material abundance. The Lord cares for our bodies as well and teaches us to pray for our daily bread, but the greatest blessing this miracle points to is that a sinner meets Jesus, the bread of life, and has the hunger of his soul resolved. The bread of the body leaves us hungry again, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives eternal life.

Jesus made the food Himself, but He distributed it to the multitude through the hands of His disciples. In the same way, the Lord uses believers who have received the remission of sin, and His Church, to preach the gospel to the world. The person who believes the gospel must not eat the food of life alone and be satisfied. He must deliver the baptism of Jesus, the cross, and the resurrection to those still starving under sin and judgment.

Therefore, we must not be discouraged that we have little, nor calculate only the number and ability of people. We must offer to the Lord the little time, talent, and substance we have,

and faithfully share the food of the gospel we have received from Him. The Lord, who fed so many people with seven loaves and a few little fish, still today saves countless souls from sin and death through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 15

[Question] 1. Summarize what kind of Person Jesus is revealed to be in the events of Matthew chapter 15.

In Matthew chapter 15, Jesus Christ is revealed as the One who upholds the Word of God rightly, and as the Savior who examines the heart of man, saves those who come to Him in faith, and has compassion on the sick and hungry multitude.

1. The One who exalts the commandment of God above the tradition of men (verses 1–9)

The Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus' disciples for not keeping the tradition of the elders. But Jesus rebuked them, saying that they were rather transgressing the commandment of God in order to keep the tradition of men.

Jesus is the One who regards obeying the Word of God as more important than outward religious forms.

2. The One who examines the heart of man (verses 10–20)

Jesus taught that what defiles a man is not the food that goes into the mouth but the evil thoughts, words, and deeds that come out of the heart.

Jesus is the One who looks upon the sin of the heart and the spiritual state of a person as more important than his outward appearance or rituals.

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3. The One who rebukes the stubborn religious leaders (verses 12–14)

Jesus spoke of the Pharisees as trees that God had not planted and as the blind leading the blind. They claimed to teach the Word of God, but in reality they were leading the people down the wrong path with the tradition of men.

Jesus is the One who clearly exposes the hypocrisy and wrong teachings of false religious leaders.

4. The One who bestows grace even on Gentiles who come to Him in faith (verses 21–28)

The woman of Canaan pleaded with Jesus to heal her demon-possessed daughter. Jesus acknowledged the woman's humble and earnest faith and healed her daughter.

The salvation of Jesus is not limited to the Jews alone but is also bestowed on Gentiles who come to Him in faith.

5. The One who heals all the sick (verses 29–31)

Jesus healed many sick people, including the lame, the maimed, the blind, and the mute. Seeing those miracles, the multitude glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus is the One who heals the weaknesses of both body and soul and reveals the power of God.

6. The One who has compassion on the hungry multitude (verses 32–39)

Jesus saw that the multitude who had been with Him for three days had nothing to eat, and He had compassion on them. And with seven loaves and a few little fish, He fed four thousand people until they were filled.

Jesus is the One who knows not only people's spiritual needs but also their physical needs and fills them abundantly.

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The Jesus revealed in Matthew chapter 15, therefore, is the Savior of compassion and power, who exalts the Word of God above the tradition of men, exposes the sin of the heart, and bestows grace on those who come to Him in faith, beyond both Jew and Gentile.

[Question] 2. In Matthew 15:1, 2, what conduct of the disciples did the Pharisees and scribes make an issue of?

The Pharisees and scribes protested to Jesus that His disciples had broken the tradition of the elders by not washing their hands when they ate bread.

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.'" (Matthew 15:1–2)

Here, washing hands does not mean ordinary handwashing for hygiene, but the religious rite of purification practiced according to the tradition of the elders. The Pharisees and scribes criticized Jesus' disciples not by the standard of God's commandment but by the standard of a tradition made by men.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 15:3–6, explain how the commandment of God and the tradition of men are contrasted.

Jesus pointed out the contradiction of the tradition by taking as an example how God's commandment to honor one's parents had been nullified by the tradition of men.

"He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." (Matthew 15:3–6)

God commanded people to honor and care for their parents. But the Pharisees and scribes taught that if a person said that the wealth he should have given to his parents had been dedicated to God, he did not have to support his parents.

In the end, by making people neglect their parents in the name of serving God, the contradiction arose that the tradition of men made the commandment of God of no effect. Jesus pointed out that the tradition of men can never come before the Word of God.

[Question] 4. In Matthew 15:8, 9, what was the actual state of those who clung to the tradition of men?

Those who cling to the tradition honor God with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from God, and they teach the commandments of men as if they were the Word of God. Therefore their worship becomes vain worship.

"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8–9)

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Outwardly they seemed pious and appeared to serve God well, but in reality they regarded the tradition of men as more important than the Word of God. The true state of those who clung to the tradition, therefore, was that of hypocritical believers who kept up only the outward forms of religion while their hearts had left God.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 15:10, 11, what did Jesus declare to the multitude to be what defiles a man?

Jesus declared that it is not the food that goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth that defiles a man. He gave these words in connection with the Pharisees and scribes criticizing His disciples for eating without washing their hands.

"When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.'" (Matthew 15:10–11)

The Pharisees and scribes regarded as important the outward rite of washing hands according to the tradition of the elders. But Jesus taught that keeping such outward regulations does not make a person's heart clean. Food enters the mouth, passes through the stomach, and goes out of the body, but the words and deeds that come out of the mouth reveal what is inside a person's heart.

In the words that follow, Jesus explained that out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies. The fundamental cause that defiles a man before God, therefore, is not food or unwashed hands but the sin that is in his heart. Evil words and deeds have

not suddenly come in from the outside, but are the result that comes out of the human heart, which is inherently full of sin.

Man cannot wash away the sins of his heart with outward religious rituals or good deeds. Even if he attends worship services, fasts, gives to charity, or offers prayers of repentance over and over, these things cannot remove the sin itself that is in his heart. If a person puts the tradition of men and religious forms before the commandment of God, he may look pious on the outside, but his heart can still remain defiled by sin.

What makes the heart of man clean is only the gospel of the water and the Spirit fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus took all the sins of mankind onto His own body; bearing those sins, He received the judgment of sin by shedding His blood and dying on the cross; and He rose again from the dead and completed salvation. Whoever believes in this gospel with his heart receives the remission of all his sins and becomes a clean, righteous person before God.

Jesus' words, therefore, do not mean that there is no need to keep hygiene, but that we must distinguish between outward washing and the washing of sin in the soul. A person must first admit the fact that sin comes out of his own heart, and must receive the complete remission of the sins of his heart by believing not in his own deeds or religious forms but in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

[Question] 6. In Matthew 15:12, what did the disciples say to Jesus after hearing the words of rebuke He spoke to the multitude?

The disciples came to Jesus and told Him that the Pharisees

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had been offended when they heard that saying.

"Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?'" (Matthew 15:12)

Here, being "offended" does not mean that the Pharisees, on hearing Jesus' rebuke, realized their wrong and repented; it means that they took those words as displeasing and harbored resentment. Jesus had rebuked them for putting the tradition of the elders before the Word of God and for honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far removed from Him.

The disciples reported this because they were concerned that Jesus' words had hurt the feelings of the Pharisees. But Jesus did not change the truth to please people. Whoever hears the Word of God must not stumble when that Word rebukes his own thoughts and deeds, but must admit his wrong and turn back before the Word.

[Question] 7. In Matthew 15:13, 14, what answer did Jesus give the disciples who reported that the Pharisees had been offended?

Jesus told His disciples to let the Pharisees alone, for everything that God the Father had not planted would be uprooted. He also said that they were the blind leading other blind people, and that in the end both the leaders and the followers would fall into a ditch together.

"But He answered and said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.'" (Matthew 15:13–14)

Jesus taught His disciples that they did not need to fear the

Pharisees' reaction or retaliation. This is because God would in the end remove every teaching and every leader that did not come from Him. The disciples were to follow the Word of God rather than human authority, and were not to follow the teachings of spiritually blind leaders.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 15:15, 16, what did Jesus say to Peter, who asked Him to explain the parable?

When Peter asked Jesus to explain the parable about what defiles a man, Jesus asked whether the disciples were also still without understanding.

"Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding?'" (Matthew 15:15–16)

Jesus pointed out that even after hearing so many words, the disciples had not grasped the meaning that it is not outward food or rites of purification but the sin that comes out of a person's heart that defiles him. He then explained the meaning of the parable by comparing what goes into the mouth with what comes out of the heart.

[Question] 9. In Matthew 15:17–20, how did Jesus explain the difference between what goes into the mouth and what comes out of the mouth?

Jesus compared the food that goes into the mouth with what comes out of the mouth as follows.

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What goes into the mouth

The food that goes into the mouth enters the stomach and is then expelled from the body. Therefore, neither food itself nor the act of eating with unwashed hands can defile a person's heart and soul.

What comes out of the mouth

The words and deeds that come out of the mouth proceed from a person's heart. Because the evil thoughts and sins that come out of the heart appear as words and deeds, these are what defile a person spiritually.

"Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man." (Matthew 15:17–20)

The fundamental cause that defiles a man, therefore, is not the food that comes in from the outside but the sin that is in his heart. Jesus taught that the cleanness of the heart is more important than outward rites of purification. This does not mean that there is no need to wash one's hands for hygiene, but that unwashed hands do not make a person spiritually unclean.

[Question] 10. In Matthew 15:21, describe what kind of land *"the region of Tyre and Sidon,"* where Jesus went, was.

Tyre and Sidon were the leading port cities of the ancient region of Phoenicia, located on the Mediterranean coast

northwest of Galilee. Today they correspond to the region of Lebanon. The two cities prospered through maritime trade and were regarded as Gentile territory outside the land of Israel.

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon." (Matthew 15:21)

The characteristics of the region of Tyre and Sidon are as follows.

• It was a Mediterranean coastal region located northwest of Galilee.

• It was a Gentile region inhabited by the Phoenicians.

• They were port cities that prospered through trade and seafaring.

• In the Old Testament they were also rebuked for idolatry and pride.

When Jesus went to this place, a woman of Canaan came to Him and pleaded with Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter.

Jesus' going to the region of Tyre and Sidon, therefore, was His crossing the border of Israel into Gentile territory, and the woman of Canaan, though a Gentile, received the Lord's grace through faith.

[Question] 11. Where was the place where the daughter of the woman of Canaan was healed, and where were the various regions in which Jesus healed the sick?

The place where the daughter of the woman of Canaan was healed was the region of Tyre and Sidon. When Jesus entered that Gentile region, a woman of Canaan who lived in that area came to Him and pleaded with Him to have mercy on her

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severely demon-possessed daughter.

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.'" (Matthew 15:21–22)

Seeing the woman's faith, Jesus said, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire,"* and her daughter was healed from that very hour. Matthew does not record the exact village or the location of the house where the daughter was, but states that this took place in the region of Tyre and Sidon.

Afterward, Jesus left the region of Tyre and Sidon and came to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus went up on the mountain by the shore and sat down, great multitudes brought many sick people, including the lame, the maimed, the blind, and the mute, and laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them.

"Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them." (Matthew 15:29–30)

The main regions of healing recorded in Matthew chapter 15, therefore, are the region of Tyre and Sidon, where the daughter of the woman of Canaan was healed, and the mountain by the Sea of Galilee, where many sick people were healed. After feeding the four thousand, Jesus went to the region of Magdala, but Matthew chapter 15 contains no record of His healing the sick in Magdala.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 15:22, who was the person that came crying out for her demon-possessed daughter?

The person who pleaded with Jesus to heal her daughter was a woman of Canaan who came out of the region of Tyre and Sidon.

"And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.'" (Matthew 15:22)

Though this woman was a Gentile, she called Jesus *"O Lord, Son of David"* and earnestly asked Him to have mercy on her severely demon-possessed daughter.

[Question] 13. In Matthew 15:22, what did the woman of Canaan call Jesus?

The woman of Canaan called Jesus *"O Lord, Son of David."*

"And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.'" (Matthew 15:22)

"Lord" is a title that acknowledged Jesus' authority and power, and *"Son of David"* is a title that refers to the Messiah promised by God. Though the woman of Canaan was a Gentile, she believed in Jesus as the promised Savior and pleaded for His help.

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[Question] 14. In Matthew 15:22, 23, what was Jesus' first response to the woman's cry?

The woman of Canaan pleaded with Jesus to have mercy on her and asked Him to heal her severely demon-possessed daughter.

"And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.'" (Matthew 15:22)

But at first Jesus did not answer her a word. As the woman kept following and crying out, the disciples asked Him to send her away.

"But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.'" (Matthew 15:23)

Jesus' silence was not a final rejection of the woman. Through the conversation that followed, the woman's humble and persistent faith was revealed, and Jesus finally praised her faith and healed her daughter.

[Question] 15. In Matthew 15:23, 24, state the disciples' request and Jesus' answer.

When the disciples asked Jesus to send away the woman of Canaan who kept crying out, Jesus answered that He had not been sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

"But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" (Matthew 15:23–24)

These words made it clear that Jesus' earthly ministry was first being carried out for Israel, God's covenant people. But this did not mean that Gentiles were forever excluded from salvation. As the woman of Canaan continued to plead in faith, Jesus praised her faith and healed her daughter.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 15:25, explain the heart of the woman of Canaan and her attitude in pleading.

Even in her desperate situation, the woman of Canaan did not give up but relied only on Jesus' help with humble and earnest faith.

"Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!'" (Matthew 15:25)

In the heart and attitude of the woman of Canaan appear the desperation of a mother who wanted to save her demon-possessed daughter, the humility of lowering herself before Jesus, the faith that called Jesus *"Lord"* and acknowledged His power, the persistence that did not back away even when she received no immediate answer, and the resolve to seek only Jesus' help and no other means.

The woman of Canaan pleaded relying wholly on Jesus' compassion and power, without putting forward her own qualification or merit.

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[Question] 17. In Matthew 15:26, what did Jesus answer to her second plea, speaking of "*the children's bread*" and "*the little dogs*"?

To the woman of Canaan's second plea, Jesus answered that it was not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.

"But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.'" (Matthew 15:26)

In this metaphor, the children refer to the people of Israel; the bread refers to the grace and blessings of salvation that God gives; and the little dogs refer to the Gentiles, who were at that time outside the covenant. Jesus was speaking of the order in which the work of salvation would first be given to Israel.

These words were not a final answer meant to insult the woman of Canaan or to reject her completely. Through the conversation that followed, the woman's humble and persistent faith was revealed, and Jesus finally praised her faith greatly and healed her daughter.

[Question] 18. In Matthew 15:27, 28, what was the woman's answer, and how did Jesus evaluate her faith?

When the woman of Canaan heard Jesus' words that it was not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs, she neither protested nor defended herself. Acknowledging that Jesus' words were right, she answered that even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

"And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the

crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matthew 15:27–28)

The woman acknowledged the fact that she was a Gentile who could not claim the covenant and privileges given to the people of Israel. She did not demand that she be treated the same as the children, nor did she argue that Jesus' judgment was wrong. Rather, she accepted her position and her lack of qualification as they were, and believed that even the small crumbs falling from the master's table would be enough for her daughter to be healed.

The woman believed in Jesus as the Master abundant in grace and power. She did not withdraw even when Jesus at first answered her nothing and said that He had been sent to the lost sheep of Israel. Even after hearing the words about the children's bread and the little dogs, she did not lose heart but relied on Jesus' compassion to the end.

Jesus evaluated this woman's faith as great and said that it would be done for her as she desired.

"Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matthew 15:28)

The woman's faith was not great because she claimed to have merit or qualification. While she acknowledged her own state humbly and honestly, she did not doubt Jesus' compassion and power in the least. She did not reject the Lord's words with her own thoughts but accepted those words as right, and she believed that Jesus alone was the One who would solve all the problems of herself and her daughter.

Sinners who come before the gospel of the water and the Spirit also need this kind of faith. Man is a sinner who has no

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righteousness or merit to put forward before God, and he cannot wash away his sins or obtain salvation by his own deeds. He must admit this fact and believe the Word that Jesus took all the sins of the world onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and then completed salvation by rising again.

Just as the woman of Canaan believed in the Lord's abundant grace and received His answer, whoever acknowledges his own sinful state and believes with his heart in the salvation fulfilled by Jesus Christ receives the remission of all his sins. Great faith, therefore, is not a faith that boasts of self-assurance or human persistence, but a faith that acknowledges God's judgment as right and relies to the end on the Lord's grace and salvation bestowed on unqualified sinners.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 15:29–39, explain where Jesus moved to and His two works there.

Jesus left the region of Tyre and Sidon, came to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain, where He healed many sick people and performed the miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish.

"Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there." (Matthew 15:29)

There Jesus healed many sick people—the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and others—and fed four thousand people with seven loaves and a few little fish.

After finishing all these works, He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and went to the region of Magdala.

"And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala." (Matthew 15:39)

[Question] 20. In Matthew 15:32, what heart did Jesus have when He saw the multitude that had been with Him for three days?

Jesus had compassion on the multitude.

"Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.'" (Matthew 15:32)

The multitude had already been with Jesus for three days and had nothing to eat. Jesus was concerned that if He sent them away hungry, they would faint on the way back. Jesus is the Lord of compassion, who attentively cares not only for people's spiritual needs but even for their physical hunger and weakness.

[Question] 21. In Matthew 15:32–38, arrange in order the course of the miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish.

The miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish is the event in which Jesus fed four thousand men, besides women and children, until they were filled, with seven loaves and a few little fish.

The miracle took place in the following order.

• The multitude had been with Jesus for three days but had nothing to eat.

• Jesus had compassion on them, concerned that they would faint on the way.

• The disciples asked where they could get enough food in the wilderness to feed so many people.

• Jesus asked the disciples how many loaves they had, and

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they answered that they had seven loaves and a few little fish.

• Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

• Taking the loaves and the fish, He gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples distributed them to the multitude.

• All the people ate and were filled.

• When the leftover fragments were gathered, they filled seven large baskets.

• Those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

"And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 15:36–38)

Jesus, who performed the miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish, is the One who has compassion on the hungry and abundantly fills the needs of many people even with a little food. The disciples were used as workers who conveyed the Lord's grace, distributing to the multitude the food they had received from Jesus.

[Question] 22. In Matthew 15:32–38, in what ways are the two miracles—the seven loaves and a few fish and the five loaves and two fish—alike, and in what ways do they differ?

The miracles of the seven loaves and the five loaves are both miracles in which Jesus fed a great multitude until they were filled with a small amount of food, but they differ in the number

of loaves, the number of people who ate, the amount of food left over, and other details.

Similarities

Both events took place in a deserted place where it was hard to find food.

• Jesus had compassion on the hungry multitude.

• The food the disciples had was far too little to feed so many people.

• Jesus had the disciples bring Him the loaves and fish they had.

• Jesus took the food, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to the disciples.

• The disciples distributed to the multitude the food they had received from Jesus.

• In both events, all the people ate and were filled, and food was still left over.

• Since only the number of men, excluding women and children, was recorded, the actual number of people who ate was far greater than the recorded number.

• Jesus is the Creator God, who knows people's needs and provides abundantly even with little.

The five loaves and two fish

"Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 14:19–21)

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• There were five loaves and two fish.

• Five thousand men ate, besides women and children.

• The fragments left over after eating filled twelve baskets.

• The disciples first suggested that, since evening had come, the multitude should be sent into the villages to buy themselves food.

• Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass.

The seven loaves and a few fish

"And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children." (Matthew 15:36–38)

There were seven loaves and a few little fish.

• Four thousand men ate, besides women and children.

• The fragments left over after eating filled seven large baskets.

• The multitude had already been with Jesus for three days and had nothing to eat.

• Jesus first said that He did not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.

• Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.

The two miracles are not different records of the same event but events that took place at different times. Jesus Himself later spoke of them separately: the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and the gathering of twelve baskets, and the feeding of the four thousand with seven loaves and the gathering of seven large baskets (Matthew 16:9–10).

In both events, it is also important that Jesus gave the food to the disciples and the disciples distributed it to the multitude.

The power and abundance of the food came from Jesus, but the work of conveying it to the people was entrusted to the disciples. This makes us think of how the Lord today entrusts the Word of life to God's Church and to the workers of the gospel, so that they may distribute it to souls.

Applied from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the food that people need most is the gospel of life that gives life to souls starved by sin. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took all the sins of the world onto His own body; bearing those sins, He received the punishment of sin by shedding His blood and dying on the cross; and He rose again from the dead and completed salvation. Whoever believes in this salvation receives the remission of all his sins and obtains eternal life.

Just as in the miracles of the five loaves and the seven loaves everyone ate their fill and food still remained, the grace of salvation completed by Jesus Christ lacks nothing even after saving sinners of any age and any people. Therefore, rather than attaching excessive symbolic meaning to the numbers in the two miracles, we should understand them centered on the heart of Jesus, who has compassion on the hungry; on His power to provide abundantly; and on the mission of the disciples, who must distribute to souls the gospel of life they have received from the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Believe in the gospel that makes the heart clean, not in the tradition of men

< Matthew 15:1-20 >

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'' When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, 'Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.' Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?' But He answered and said,

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'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.' Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.' So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'"

When the Word of God is obscured by man's standards

Matthew chapter 15 begins with words that reveal what truly makes a person clean and what defiles a person. The Pharisees and scribes who came from Jerusalem made an issue of the fact that Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands when they ate bread. The handwashing they spoke of did not mean merely an ordinary habit of hygiene. It was an accusation that the disciples had not performed the religious rite of purification according to the tradition of the elders.

To them, the regulations that men had built up over long ages were as important as the Word of God. In fact, that tradition actually stood ahead of the Word of God. So even while standing before Jesus, the Son of God, they did not ask for the Lord's will. They judged and condemned Jesus' disciples by the standards they themselves had set.

The standard of faith must always be the Word of God. We

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must not first ask what we have been accustomed to keeping, but ask what God has said. Tradition must remain under the Word, and the moment it obscures the Word, it must be discarded.

Disobedience that looks pious

Jesus exposed the wrong of the Pharisees and scribes through the commandment to honor one's parents. God had commanded them to honor their parents. Yet they taught that if a person said that what he should have given to his parents had been given to God, he could be freed from the duty of supporting his parents. Outwardly it seemed to honor God all the more, but in reality it was a religious excuse for evading God's commandment.

This is the frightening thing about hypocrisy. Hypocrisy always appears clothed in a pious form. One can go against God's will while claiming to act for God, and turn away from the responsibility of love while speaking of devotion. One can honor God with the lips while pursuing one's own gain and one's own reputation in the heart.

Jesus said that they made the Word of God of no effect by their tradition. It is not only being ignorant of the Word of God that is dangerous. It is even more dangerous to know the Word and yet change it to fit one's own thoughts. For man has a tendency to use the Word to make his own deeds look right.

The distance between the lips and the heart

The Lord revealed their state by quoting the words of Isaiah: *"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me."* A great distance

can arise between the confession of the lips and the faith of the heart. A person can sing hymns, offer prayers, and speak of the Scriptures while in his heart relying on his own righteousness rather than on God.

True worship offered to God does not consist merely in the beauty of words. True worship is to lay down one's own thoughts before the Word of God and receive that Word into one's heart. When God says we are sinners, we must acknowledge that we are sinners; and when He speaks of the salvation He has accomplished, we must believe that salvation just as it is.

When the commandments of men are taught as if they were the will of God, worship becomes vain. However zealously one performs, that zeal cannot take the place of the truth. Even if a person has offered early-morning prayers for long years, fasted, and served, if he believes that such deeds wash away the sins of his heart, he drifts away from God's way of salvation. Human effort can be a service offered to God in gratitude, but it can never be the price of the remission of sin.

Romans 3:20 says, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* The law shines light on the sin that is in our hearts. But the effort to keep the law cannot itself wash sin away. It is like a mirror that can show the dirt on one's face but cannot wash that dirt away.

The source that defiles a man

Jesus called the multitude and said, *"Hear and understand."* For the Lord was not merely trying to correct one rule about food. He was setting right man's fundamental misunderstanding about

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sin. People usually think that what comes in from the outside defiles them. They think they sin because their environment is bad, because other people have done wrong, or because the world is evil.

But Jesus said that what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and that this is what defiles a man. And He specified what comes out of the heart: evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies. Sin is not dust that happens to settle on us from the outside; it flows out from within the human heart.

What man needs, therefore, is not mere behavioral correction. Trimming a few branches does not change the root. Hiding the fruits of sin one by one does not make the heart clean. Man must acknowledge before God that he is a being from whom sin continually comes out.

The salvation that comes into view only when one's own righteousness collapses

People find it hard to admit the reality of their own hearts. Comparing themselves with others, they want to think that they are relatively good. They expect God to accept them because they have not committed any great wrong and have led a faithful religious life. But before God, comparisons with other people have no effect at all.

The person who has seen the sin of his heart also comes to realize that he cannot make himself clean by his own deeds. Even if he resolves today to live a good life, evil thoughts arise again tomorrow. Even if he regrets his wrong and offers prayers of repentance, still other sins come out of his heart and conduct. That is why the person who relies on his own deeds is easily

gripped by fear the longer he leads his religious life. He strives to wash away his sins, but sin still remains in his conscience.

Repentance must go beyond turning from the wrong path and reach the point of believing the Word of God. It is necessary to admit the wrongs one has committed. But daily confessions and tears do not pay the price of sin in our place. The wages of sin cannot be erased by human emotion or toil; it is resolved only by the way of salvation that God has appointed.

The collapse of one's own righteousness is not meant to end in despair. It is the beginning of accepting the righteousness God has prepared. Only when we stop looking for cleanness in ourselves does the complete salvation fulfilled by Jesus Christ come into view.

The Word that plows up the field of the heart

For the seed of the gospel to take deep root in the heart, the Word of God must first expose man's wrong thinking. As long as a person thinks that he is basically a good person who only needs to fix a few mistakes, the gospel of the complete remission of sin does not sound urgent to him. The person who does not know the depth of his disease does not seek a physician, and the person who does not know the reality of his sin does not seek the Savior's complete grace.

God's commandments are not a ladder given to us so that we could become righteous by ourselves. Rather, they shine on our hearts and deeds and make us realize our sin. They shatter our delusion of feeling safe because we have not murdered even while hating others, and of counting ourselves righteous because our lust has not shown outwardly even while we harbor it in our hearts. Standing honestly before the law, no one can boast of his

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own deeds.

Yet the purpose of the law does not lie only in discouraging people. It leads the person who has realized that he cannot escape from sin by his own strength to Jesus Christ. Plowing up a field is not meant to destroy the seed but to let the seed take root. So also the Word of God tears down our own righteousness and then lets the seed of the gospel settle in our hearts.

We must acknowledge that we are beings who produce sin from our very hearts. And we must hear the gospel that Jesus has borne even such deep sins in full. When our own righteousness collapses before the Word and we believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the barren heart becomes good ground that receives life.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit that washes the heart

Jesus knew all the sins that come out of the heart of man. Yet He did not abandon us but came to this earth to save us from sin. The Lord did not demand that we first make our hearts clean and then come to Him. He Himself accomplished what we could not do.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took on the sins of everyone in the world. John the Baptist, as the greatest among those born of women, baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. When Jesus received that baptism, He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. To fulfill all the righteousness of God that makes sinners righteous, Jesus received and bore the sins of mankind.

The next day, John the Baptist saw Jesus and testified,

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The sin of the world that Jesus carried away includes all the sins we commit from birth to death. It includes not only the revealed sins of conduct but also the evil thoughts, fornication, greed, lies, and blasphemies that come out of the heart. Not only the sins of the past but also the sins of the present and the future are included in the sin of the world.

Having taken on all those sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus went to the cross. By bleeding and dying on the cross, He received in our place the judgment of sin that we should have received, and in three days He rose again from the dead. The water testifies to the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist; the blood, to the judgment He received on the cross; and the Spirit, to the fact that Jesus is God and that this salvation is true.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, accomplished not by man's deeds but by God. Jesus said, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. We are not born again by good deeds; we are born again by believing with the heart in the salvation Jesus completed by the water and the Spirit.

A more important problem than unwashed hands

The passage makes it clear that eating with unwashed hands does not defile a man. These words do not mean that hygiene may be ignored. They mean that we must not confuse the cleanness of the body with the cleanness of the soul. Hands can be washed with water, but the sins of the heart cannot be washed away with soap or with rites of purification.

When the order is reversed, the gospel turns into a religion

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of works. We do not become righteous because we have lived rightly; we become righteous by believing in the fact that Jesus has completely washed away our sins, and then, in gratitude for that grace, we seek to live rightly. Our good life is not the root of salvation but the fruit that grows out of salvation.

If sin remains in the heart as it is and only the outward appearance is corrected, a person may look pious before men. But before God he remains a sinner. Conversely, even if his shortcomings are still visible, the person whose sins have all been washed away by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is righteous before God. This is not a claim that dresses oneself up as righteous, but a confession of faith that believes what God has done.

So that the blind may not lead the blind

The disciples told Jesus that the Pharisees had been offended when they heard His words. But Jesus did not fit the truth to people's feelings. He said that everything God the Father had not planted would be uprooted, and that if a spiritually blind guide is followed, both will fall into a ditch.

A spiritual leader must not lead people by his own experience or by the tradition of his denomination. He must lead them to the Word of God. To comfort people by saying they have no sin when they do, or to teach that even those who believe in Jesus must offer prayers of repentance every day for their sins to be washed away, is not leading sinners to the complete gospel. It is setting up man's deeds once again as a condition of salvation.

Rather than asking who is famous or which tradition is older, we must examine whether a teaching agrees with the gospel testified by the Scriptures. We must confirm whether it clearly

proclaims that Jesus actually took on our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, that He received the complete judgment of those sins on the cross, and that He became the Savior by rising again.

Discerning the truth is not a matter of hating people or condemning them rashly. Rather, it is revealing the gospel in love so that a soul may not follow the wrong path and fall into a ditch. We must humbly learn the Word, watchful that we too can at any time put man's thoughts ahead of the Word.

The fruit of life borne after receiving grace

To say that we have received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean that it no longer matters how we live. Rather, it means that we have been freed from the heavy burden of trying to become righteous by our own deeds and have come to do good out of gratitude for God's grace. Before receiving the remission of sin, people do good to build up their own righteousness; after receiving the remission of sin, they serve God and their neighbors in gratitude for the love already bestowed on them.

Even in the born-again, the thoughts of the flesh and weaknesses remain. They have not become people in whose hearts evil thoughts never arise at all. But within them are the word of the gospel and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not let them take sin lightly; He makes them realize their wrongs and turn back according to the Word. The righteous are not people who never commit a single sin, but people who believe that all their sins were passed on to Jesus and judged, and who seek to live following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When they do wrong, they neither hide it nor justify it. They

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acknowledge the wrong before God, apologize to anyone they have harmed, and seek the help of the Word so as not to repeat the same path. But they do not believe that their tears and apologies wash away sin anew. They turn back standing on the gospel that Jesus has already removed even that sin by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross.

The good fruit God desires is not a forced appearance of piety. It is a life that honors one's parents, cares for brothers and sisters, shares the time and possessions one has received for the sake of the gospel, and delivers the word of life to souls still under sin. Such fruit is not a price paid to obtain salvation but a response of gratitude offered by the person who has received salvation freely.

The faith that believes the Word with the heart

God knows our hearts through and through. He knows the thoughts we want to hide, our repeated weaknesses, and even the sins we will commit in the future. Yet God, knowing all those sins, sent His only begotten Son, and Jesus completed our salvation by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross.

What matters now, therefore, is not how clean my heart looks but how God has dealt with my sins. When we look into our own hearts we find shortcomings, but when we look at the word of the gospel we find the perfect righteousness Jesus has fulfilled. Faith is not denying one's own state; it is honestly acknowledging one's sins while seeing, as greater still, the righteousness of the Lord who has borne all those sins.

Romans 10:10 says, *"For with the heart one believes unto*

righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The confession of the lips must come out of the faith of the heart. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart confesses with his mouth that God has completely washed away his sins. And he comes to proclaim not his own boasting but the righteousness of Jesus.

We must not cover our hearts with the tradition of men. Nor must we hide our sins behind religious appearances. We must acknowledge that we are beings from whose hearts sin comes out, and believe in the gospel God has prepared. This gospel—that Jesus took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the cross, and rose again—makes our hearts clean from all sins.

The person who has this faith no longer serves God in order to build up his own righteousness. In gratitude for the grace already received, he follows the Word, honors his parents, loves his neighbors, and preaches the gospel to other souls. He does not live in fear, bound to the commandments of men, but lives by faith within God's perfect salvation. This is the true purity and the true worship that the Lord teaches us through the words of Matthew chapter 15. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that seeks grace and the Lord who feeds with compassion

< Matthew 15:21-39 >

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour. Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the

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God of Israel. Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' Then His disciples said to Him, 'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala."

The person who came out of her own place to the Lord

In the latter half of Matthew chapter 15, three scenes that seem different from one another follow in succession. A woman of Canaan pleads for her demon-possessed daughter, many sick people are healed at Jesus' feet, and a great multitude that has been with the Lord for three days eats bread. But at the center that binds all these scenes into one is the compassion of the Lord. The Lord is the Savior who bestows grace on the unqualified, heals the helpless, and feeds the hungry.

The woman of Canaan was a person of the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Gentile outside the covenant of Israel. She did not remain within her own people, her religion, and her way of life,

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but came out of that region and came to Jesus. This does not mean merely a geographical move. She acknowledged that what she had relied on could solve neither her daughter's problem nor the problem of her own soul, and she came to the Savior.

This woman called Jesus *"O Lord, Son of David."* She did not see Jesus as merely a man good at healing diseases. She believed in Him as the Messiah promised by God, the Lord who had the power to deliver her daughter from the terrible demon. True faith begins with knowing who Jesus is.

The faith revealed when the answer is delayed

The woman cried out loudly, pleading to be shown mercy. But at first Jesus did not answer her a word. The disciples too were uncomfortable with her continual crying and asked Him to send her away. The immediate answer the woman had hoped for was nowhere to be seen.

Jesus said that He had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He then said that it was not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs. These words could have deeply wounded the woman's pride. She could have turned away in anger, or she could have insisted that she too deserved to receive grace.

But the woman did not leave the Lord. She did not abandon her faith in the Lord because the answer differed from her expectation. She knew that salvation was in the Lord and that there was no way other than the Lord's grace. So she came still closer, worshiped Him, and pleaded, *"Lord, help me!"*

Faith is not demanding that God move according to my will. It is acknowledging that the Lord is right and that I am a person who needs His grace. To trust the Lord even when the answer is

delayed and words different from my thoughts are heard—this is faith.

The confession that did not defend itself

In the answer of the woman of Canaan is contained the faith that lowers itself and relies only on the Lord's grace. She said, *"Yes, Lord."* She did not defend herself before the Lord's judgment. Nor did she claim to have the same rights as the children of Israel. She only sought grace, saying that even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.

In this confession are contained two clear recognitions. One is a recognition of herself, and the other is a recognition of the Lord. She acknowledged the fact that she had no qualification to put forward. At the same time she believed that the Lord had the power to solve her daughter's problem completely with even a small, crumb-like grace.

Jesus praised the woman's faith as great. Great faith does not consist in expressing great emotion. It consists in knowing oneself rightly and believing in Jesus rightly. The faith that relies not on one's own qualification but on the Lord's compassion, and accepts that the Lord's word is right—that is great faith.

Grace is given to the unqualified

The woman did not plead only for her daughter to be pitied; she said, *"Have mercy on me."* She embraced her daughter's suffering as her own, and she knew that she herself was a person who could not live without the Lord's compassion. The Lord said, *"Let it be to you as you desire,"* and her daughter was

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healed from that very hour.

Salvation does not depend on a person's lineage, position, or merit. The woman, who was not an Israelite, also received grace by believing in Jesus. The Lord's salvation is open to everyone who acknowledges that he is a sinner and seeks grace.

We have no merit to lay before the Lord. But neither do we have any reason to despair. For salvation does not depend on our qualification but on the righteousness Jesus has fulfilled. Just as the woman of Canaan believed that even the crumbs falling from the master's table were enough, we must believe that the salvation of Jesus is a perfect grace, more than sufficient to save every sinner.

The Savior who made sinners whole

When Jesus sat on the mountain by the Sea of Galilee, great multitudes brought the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many other sick people. They laid them at Jesus' feet, and the Lord healed them. The mute spoke, the maimed were made whole, the lame walked, and the blind saw.

Jesus is the Creator God, the One who has the power to heal human weakness. This scene also mirrors our own spiritual helplessness. We were originally like the blind who cannot see the truth of God, and like the mute who cannot speak the righteousness of God. We knew the right way but had no strength to walk it, and we had no full ability to serve God.

Such people the Lord has saved. By letting us hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, He opened our spiritual eyes and made us speak the righteousness Jesus has fulfilled. Before, we thought we had to cling to prayers of repentance all our lives to wash away our sins, but now we have

come to know that the Lord took on all our sins once and for all and was judged for them.

The complete salvation that bore all sins

Jesus, who healed the diseases of the body, is also the Savior who saves man's soul from sin. Man's most fundamental disease is the sin of the heart, and the result of sin is judgment and death. If this problem is not solved, even if the body becomes healthy for a while, eternal life cannot be obtained.

Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in sinless flesh. And through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received and bore all the sins of mankind. John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind, and through that work Jesus fulfilled all the righteousness of God. That is why John the Baptist testified of Jesus as *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*

Carrying the sin of the world He had taken on through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus went to the cross. By bleeding and dying on the cross He received the penalty of all sins, and by rising again in three days He gives new life to those who believe. Not one of these—the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, His death on the cross, and His resurrection—can be separated from the others. The water, the blood, and the Spirit together testify to the complete salvation of sinners.

If our sins had not been passed on to Jesus, His death on the cross could not have been the judgment of our sins. But because Jesus took on all sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood He shed on the cross became the blood of judgment that paid the price of all those sins. The Lord did not

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merely cover sin over; He bore that sin and received its punishment in full.

The person who believes in this gospel with his heart does not need to add any further price to wash away his sins. When he realizes a wrong, he acknowledges it before God and turns back, but he does not believe that his sins are washed anew each time. He returns to the word of the already completed salvation, believes that Jesus bore even that sin, gives thanks, and turns back to the right path.

The heart that could not send them away hungry

The multitude that was with Jesus had already been listening to the Word for three days. They had nothing to eat, and they could faint on the way home. The Lord knew their situation first, called His disciples, and said, *"I have compassion on the multitude."*

The Lord is not One who speaks only of the problems of the soul and ignores the needs of the body. Having come to this earth in a human body, He Himself experienced hunger and weariness, and so He knows our weaknesses. Before the multitude asked for help, He was concerned that they would collapse on the way. This is the heart of Jesus, our Shepherd.

In particular, the Lord has compassion on souls that go hungry. Man cannot live on the food of the flesh alone. However much one possesses, if there is no assurance of the remission of sin and no eternal life, the heart goes on starving. That is why the Lord established His Church and made it share the food of life, the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The small things entrusted to the Lord's hands

The disciples asked where they could get bread enough to feed so many people in the wilderness. By their calculation it was impossible. Jesus did not first demand of them what they did not have, but asked, *"How many loaves do you have?"* The disciples had seven loaves and a few little fish.

In man's eyes it was far too little. But when that small amount was entrusted to the Lord's hands and the Lord gave thanks, it became food that fed the great multitude. All the people ate and were filled, and the leftover fragments filled seven large baskets. The Lord's grace was not a grace that barely staved off lack, but an abundant grace that fed everyone with plenty to spare.

What we must do is not to fabricate what we do not have, but to offer to the Lord in faith what we have received. Preaching the gospel to one person, sharing one book, praying and serving for the gospel ministry of the church—such small deeds can become channels through which the Lord gives life to many souls. The outcome belongs to the Lord; we need only be faithful in the place assigned to us.

The food distributed through the disciples' hands

Jesus took the loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples distributed them to the multitude. The source of the food was the Lord, but the disciples' hands were used in delivering it to the multitude. Today the Church and the workers of the gospel must distribute to souls the food of life they have received from the Lord.

The Church must not feed people its own ideas or human

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teachings. It must share the food of life received from the Lord, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It must proclaim exactly the Word that Jesus took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of that sin on the cross, and rose again.

The person who preaches the gospel is not the owner of the food. He must not change the Word at his own will or hide its core to suit people's tastes. He is a steward who shares what he has received from the Lord just as it is. Nor should he speak only of the food of the soul while passing by, indifferent, the actual hardships of the brothers and sisters before his eyes. With the heart of the Lord, who said He could not send them away hungry, he must care for the needs of both soul and body.

The heart we must have toward souls

The Lord saw the multitude and had compassion on them. The person who serves the gospel also needs this heart. If we only point out the wrongs of the people of the world and keep them at a distance, we cannot be said to treat them with the Lord's heart. We must pity them, asking why they wander under sin, and why, even after long religious lives, they still live with sin in their hearts.

To have compassion on souls is not to speak the truth vaguely. It is to call sin sin, while proclaiming together the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has removed all that sin. If we speak only pleasing words to gather people, or omit the core of the remission of sin, we fail to give souls the true food. It is like handing an empty bowl to a starving person.

We must hold the holy desire that even one more person would hear this gospel and receive the remission of sin. We must

pray and serve so that the bread of life may be delivered not only to our families and neighbors but also to people of other languages and cultures. We can proclaim it directly with our lips; we can support literature ministry, translation, and missions; and we can help from behind so that the workers of the gospel can do their work. The roles differ, but the aim is one: that a soul may believe in the righteousness of Jesus and live.

The Lord entrusted the small loaves to the disciples' hands and had them delivered to the great multitude. Today also, God feeds souls through those who believe the gospel and through the Church. To take part in this work is not only a burden but a great grace. For we too were once starving people, but we were fed the bread of life, and now we are used in the Lord's work of sharing that food with others.

The service of those who believe in the abundant grace

Even after all the people had eaten their fill, seven large baskets remained. The Lord's power and grace are not confined within man's calculations. Unlike our thought that sharing will diminish what we have, the word of life received from the Lord gives life to more people the more it is shared.

The grace of salvation is not insufficient for any great sinner it meets. The person who thinks he has ruined his life, the person who thinks he cannot come to God because of his repeated sins, the person who has long wandered under wrong teachings—none of them is an exception. What Jesus took on through the baptism He received from John the Baptist was not some sins of some people, but all the sins of everyone in the world.

Therefore the worker of the gospel must not sort people out

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in advance and give up on them. We have no authority to judge that this person seems likely to believe and that person is hopeless. Even one who seemed outside the covenant, like the woman of Canaan, received grace through faith, and those who could not walk and could not see were made whole before the Lord.

The person who believes in the abundant grace lives by sharing rather than by clutching. He does not boast of his own righteousness but proclaims the righteousness of Jesus; he does not put forward what he has done but exalts what the Lord has accomplished. Through such service, starving souls hear the gospel, the helpless rise up by faith, and the history of giving glory to God continues.

The path walked by those who have received compassion

The people in the latter half of Matthew chapter 15 all came to the Lord with problems they could not solve by their own strength. The woman of Canaan could not heal her severely demon-possessed daughter, the sick could not make themselves whole, and the disciples could not feed the great multitude in the wilderness. But the Lord had the power and the compassion to solve all those problems.

We are no different from them. We cannot wash away our own sins; even after being born again we cannot live a righteous life by our own strength alone; nor can we save a single soul by our own ability. When we acknowledge this fact, we come, like the woman of Canaan, to seek the Lord’s grace; like the sick, to lay ourselves at the Lord’s feet; and like the disciples, to offer to the Lord the little we have.

The person who has received the Lord's compassion cannot despise anyone. For he knows that he was not saved by his own qualification. When he sees a person bound by sin, he wants to preach the gospel of life rather than condemn; when he sees a weary person, he wants to share what he has received rather than look away. This is the fruit of faith that appears in the person who has received grace.

Our faith is not a faith that thinks highly of our own possibilities. It is believing the fact that we have nothing to boast of, but that the Lord's grace is great and perfect. Jesus removed all our sins by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. And He dwells in us by the Holy Spirit, leading us to believe the Word and serve the gospel.

Therefore we must not leave the Lord even when the answer is delayed. When our shortcomings are exposed, we must not make excuses but accept the Word, saying, *"Yes, Lord."* Even when no way can be seen, as in the wilderness, we must believe in the Lord who has compassion on us. The Lord is the Shepherd of love, who saves the unqualified, makes the helpless whole, and feeds the hungry with the bread of life until they are filled. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Reveal your sins before God and believe

< Matthew 15:21-28 >

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

Our Lord praised the woman of Canaan, saying, *"Great is your faith" (Matthew 15:28)*. Today's passage is the story of a woman of Canaan who met the Lord in the region of Tyre and Sidon. This woman came and worshiped Jesus, pleading, *"Lord, help me!" (Matthew 15:25)*. But the Lord said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Matthew 15:26)*. Even so, this woman did not back away, and

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at last she heard from the Lord the praise, *"Great is your faith."* We learn a great lesson from this woman's faith.

Jesus' words to the woman of Canaan

This woman was a woman of Canaan. We call the land of Canaan a Gentile land. In the Old Testament era the Israelites went in and lived in the land of Canaan, but the Canaanites were originally a Gentile people. The Israelites regarded and treated Gentiles like dogs. That is why the Lord also said to this woman, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Matthew 15:26)*. This was an expression that revealed, just as it was, the notion of that time, which did not regard Gentiles as fully human.

When Jesus entered the region of Sidon, a woman of Canaan came out of that region and cried out. She cried, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed" (Matthew 15:22)*. But Jesus answered her not a word. Even so, this woman kept calling on the Son of David, crying aloud that her daughter was severely demon-possessed and pleading to be shown mercy.

The disciples found the woman's continual crying noisy. So the disciples came and urged Him. They said, *"Send her away, for she cries out after us" (Matthew 15:23)*. In the disciples' eyes this woman was not an Israelite but a Canaanite, that is, a Gentile. So the disciples regarded her as a nuisance and wanted to send her away quickly.

Then Jesus spoke. He said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*. Still the woman pleaded stubbornly for help. Jesus said again, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"*

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(Matthew 15:26). Then the woman answered. She said, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:27)*.

Hearing these words, Jesus said, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."* And the Scripture records, *"And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (Matthew 15:28)*. From that very hour the demon went out of this woman's daughter and her illness was completely healed.

The faith that counted herself a dog and recognized the Lord

There is something here that we must think about deeply. It is the part where Jesus praised this woman's faith, saying, *"Great is your faith."* What kind of faith did this woman have, that she heard such praise from the Lord, had her desire granted, and had her daughter healed? Everyone, what faith did this woman really have?

Look at this woman's conduct. The woman cried out, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David" (Matthew 15:22)*. Jesus said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*, and He even spoke words that likened her to the little dogs. Yet this woman said that He was right, and said that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. When Jesus heard this, He praised this woman's faith as truly great.

This woman was a woman who knew well who Jesus was. She was a woman who believed in Jesus, a woman who knew that Jesus was the Savior of mankind, come indeed as the descendant of David. Even when Jesus described her as a dog, this woman said He was right and answered that even the dogs

eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table. That is, while acknowledging herself to be a dog, she exalted the Lord. This woman recognized the Lord for who He is.

This woman was in effect confessing to the Lord: Are You not the Savior of all mankind? Are You not the King of kings? Are You not the Creator? You have come to save people from sin, so I believe in You. Since I believe, heal my daughter. Because the most urgent thing for this woman was her daughter's problem, she pleaded in this way. This woman's faith in the Lord was truly great. Even when the Lord treated her like a dog and exposed her state just as it was, this woman acknowledged that she was such a person before the Lord.

As whom did this woman believe in the Lord? Just as you and I know and believe today, she believed that the Lord is truly the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Lord is the Son of God, our Savior, and our Creator. And she believed that He was her own Savior as well.

This woman knew that she was no different from a dog before God. She acknowledged just as it was that she was a vile, weak, and deficient sinner. While acknowledging herself to be such, she fully believed that the Lord had come to this earth as the Savior, and she desired to receive grace. She truly desired to be saved, desired to have her daughter's problem solved, and desired to entrust herself also to the Lord. In a word, this woman recognized who the Lord is.

At that time there were few among the Israelites who recognized who Jesus was. Even Jesus' disciples wavered, at times thinking He seemed to be the Son of God and at times not. Judas Iscariot was such a man. Seeing Jesus raise the dead, Judas thought that this One was the Messiah and Savior. But he harbored the intention of using that power to stir up the people, gather an army, and liberate Israel from Rome.

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Judas neither recognized nor believed that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior who came to save sinners from sin. He merely believed in Jesus' power and tried to use that power. But this woman of Canaan was different. Saying that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table, she confessed: I am that very dog-like person, a sinner, and You, Lord, are my Savior. I believe in You. I desire to receive grace and help from You. This is what she confessed. Seeing this woman's faith, the Lord said, *"Great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire" (Matthew 15:28)*, and from that very hour her daughter was healed.

The Lord looks at the center of the heart

Everyone, what the Lord looks at is the center of a person's heart. When we come before the Lord, He sees how we know Him and how we believe in Him, and also what kind of beings we are before Him. The person who knows his own state becomes lowly of himself, without straining to humble himself. I am no more than a creature of God. I was born a descendant of sinners; as I live in this world my heart is still filthy and my conduct falls short. The person who knows all this does not put forward his own excellence before the Lord.

The person who knows his own state does not put forward his own goodness but relies only on the Lord. Looking to the Lord's being the Savior, to His highness and His perfection, he earnestly desires to be saved by the Lord. The person who knows his own state—who knows that the Lord is our Savior and that He has saved us from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit—asks the Lord for help and entrusts his problems to the Lord. Desiring to receive the remission of sin, he holds fast to

the Lord earnestly. But the person who does not know his own state puts forward his own excellence before the Lord.

We too are like dogs before God

The Israelites treated all Gentiles like dogs. For the Gentiles knew neither the law of God nor God Himself; they did not serve God but served only idols. But when the truth is known, it is you and I who are the very ones like dogs before God. We have nothing to be proud of; we sin again and again, repeating it, and live that way all our lives until we die. What have we ever done well before God? What do we have to boast of?

The reason we do not know this is that we do not know our own state. The Lord said, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19)*. Out of a person's heart come evil thoughts, a murdering heart, an adulterous heart, and a thieving heart. All these sinful deeds come out of the sinner's heart. Therefore, even if a person who has not received the remission of sin does good deeds, his root is not good. For God looks at the center of the heart.

For a person who has not received the remission of sin to put forward his own goodness is hypocrisy and a challenge to God. Are You alone righteous? Are You alone holy? I too am this good, and I too am this holy. This is measuring shoulders with God. Measuring shoulders with Him is the same as opposing God. That is the very state of a sinner, and it is committing sin that leads to hell. At bottom, we are people who have nothing at all to be proud of before God.

In the kingdom of God, the animal regarded as the lowliest is called the dog. In our country too, the basest sort of person is

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spoken of as being like a dog. In the nation of Israel as well, lions and leopards were still counted decent animals, but the dog was despised the most. In truth, is not the state of you and me before God exactly that state of the dog? Because this woman of Canaan recognized Jesus and also acknowledged that state of hers, she heard the praise, *"Great is your faith."*

It is the same with you and me. If we know our sinful state and our state of being unable to avoid hell, and also recognize and believe that Jesus is our Savior and the Son of God, I believe that the Lord will say to us as well, *"Great is your faith."* And He gives us salvation, and counts us precious, making us God's workers.

Those who received the Lord's love

What matters is whether or not one receives love before God. There were so many people in Israel, yet the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the chief priests were excluded from that love. Those who received Jesus' love were not many. Jesus' disciples received that love. And when we look at those disciples, they were not socially impressive people. There were fishermen, and there was a man of hasty temper. Setting aside how much or little they had learned and the rank of their occupations, those who received the Lord's love were very pure people. They were the people who confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*.

Those who received the Lord's love knew their own state and recognized the Lord. Only those who exalted the Lord, believed in Him, and relied on Him received salvation. If you and I become such people, we too receive salvation. When, like this woman of Canaan, she confessed that even the dogs eat the

crumbs that fall from their master's table, the Lord said, *"Great is your faith."* This woman knew her own state and also rightly recognized the Lord. And she clung to that Lord desperately. Hers was the faith that without You, neither I nor my daughter can be saved.

Only God can remit our sins

When we believe in the Lord, do we believe like this woman? Truly, without the Lord, you and I cannot be saved. If the Lord had not come to this earth, we could not have been saved. And if there had been no one who rightly proclaimed the Lord, we could not have been saved. The Lord is God. He is literally our Master, the One who created us, the One who made the universe and all things. We must recognize Him rightly.

He who made us came to us when we had fallen into sin. We were born into this earth having inherited sin in our hearts through our parents, and because of it we came under the curse. Then God had compassion on you and me and came to us as our Savior. The Creator God put on human flesh and came to this earth. He lowered Himself to become the friend of you and me and to become our Savior.

We must recognize that Lord rightly. When we rightly recognize the Lord, you and I are truly saved. Everyone, the One who can remove our sins must be God Himself. Only God has the authority to remit man's sins. When the Lord healed the paralytic, He said, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6)*. He meant to let people know that the authority to remit sins lay in Jesus Himself.

Who is that Lord? He is the Master of you and me, and the

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Creator. He is the Owner of all things and the Master of man. The Lord is our Savior, but in His essence He is God. It says, *"The world was made through Him" (John 1:10)*. The heavens, the world of the stars, the fish in the waters, the beasts of the mountains, and even every microorganism—He made them all. It also says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16)*. God loved you and me, and so He lowered Himself for a time, became man, and came to this earth.

He removed our sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

He took on the sins of you and me by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all the sins of the world on His own body. Then He went to the cross, shed His blood, and died; and He rose again in three days and became the Savior of you and me. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore He only lowered Himself for a time; in His essence He is the Creator God. It is because He is God that He can remit the sins of you and me. Apart from God, not even an angel can remit or remove our sins.

Could the king of the underworld that people commonly speak of remove sin? Could he take pity on someone and pull him out of hell as a special favor? He absolutely cannot. Even if God had appointed a gatekeeper, he would only play the role of a gatekeeper and would have no sovereignty at all. God knows all things, and so in the end everything is handled according to the law. Only God can remit the sins of you and me.

God determined to remove the sins of you and me, and according to that determination He came to this earth. He came

clothed in human flesh and took the sins of you and me onto His own body through the baptism He received from John. Then He was crucified to death and rose from death. God has removed the sins of you and me in this way, and if we believe it, we have no sin. But if we do not believe that He has removed our sins, we will keep our sins forever and live in eternal torment in hell.

Therefore Jesus is our Savior, and in His very essence He is the Son of God and the Creator God who made the universe and all things. That is why, when we believe in Him as our God and our Savior, we are truly saved. For He took on the sins of you and me and received all the judgment on the cross. Because He has become our Savior, when we believe, He blesses us, saying, *"Great is your faith."*

Do you and I not truly want our faith to be acknowledged by the Lord? Then we must know how exalted the Lord is. We must also know concretely how completely He has made you and me sinless. And we must truly accept it in our hearts. I was a person who had sin and could only go to hell, but the Lord put on human flesh and came to this earth to save me. And with the baptism He received from John He took on my sins, carried the cross, rose from death, and saved me. We must believe that the Lord is truly the One who came for us. Only then are we saved.

If we have believed in this way, then we too have certainly received from Jesus the praise, *"Great is your faith."* He is saying: your faith is right; you know how I have saved you like this; you believe it. The One who saved you is not a mere creature or a man but God in His very essence. You believe that God became man for a time to save you from sin—this is what He is saying. When we believe like this, we are saved before God and our faith is acknowledged.

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We must acknowledge that we are bound for hell

Everyone, countless people in this age believe in Jesus. But not many know their own state and acknowledge that because of the sins they have committed and the sins in their hearts they can only go to hell. The person who does not acknowledge it cannot become a dog. Before God, everyone must become a dog. For God sees us humans as sinners, as seeds that cannot help but do evil. Therefore we too must acknowledge it so. We must not put ourselves forward before God, saying that we are decent people.

The mark of a person who has not received the remission of sin is that he keeps trying to display his own goodness. Those who attend church, and those who lead ministries, also keep wanting to display their own rightness and goodness. Picking up trash around the neighborhood is not a bad thing. It is a good thing. But before showing by such things that one's church is decent, one must first show one's heart before God.

We must confess before God like this: I am a dog-like person. I am a person in whose heart evil is heaped up, a person who does evil. For harboring evil and doing evil alone, I deserve to pass in and out of hell hundreds of times—so deficient am I. By the law of God I am one who must surely go to hell, so have mercy on me. Save me. We must confess in this way and accept the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which the Lord has saved us from sin. If you and I want to be saved, we absolutely must do so.

The person who does not want to be saved keeps putting forward his own rightness. But before God, the one who lowers himself is exalted, and the one who exalts himself is brought low. What do we have to exalt ourselves with before God? What do we have to boast of? All that we have, God has given us. Wisdom, understanding, faith, salvation, life, circumstances—

God has given them all. What is there that we have not received from God? We have received everything from God.

The person who does not know his own state keeps trying to exalt himself. Sometimes even among brothers and sisters in the church, when someone calls us a dog-like person, resentment surges up. But we must acknowledge it like this: I am truly such a person. I could only go to hell, but the Lord loved me, came to save me, and saved me. So I believed in the Lord and was saved. Even after being saved, my thoughts go wrong so very often. We must acknowledge this. If we do not acknowledge it and insist only that we are fine, resentment wells up inside and we end up hating the other person.

Are you truly decent people, humanly speaking? You thought you were decent, but what do you find when you come to know the truth? The Lord said, *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19)*. Are we not exactly such people? Do we not constantly think evil thoughts, harbor thoughts of hating and tormenting people, and hold a heart set on stealing? Do we not keep sinning, repeating it over and over?

God knows that we are all sinners

When a person commits a crime, the world also investigates. When an incident occurs in a neighborhood, those with prior records are called in and questioned first, and even the people around them and any grudges are examined. Even the police investigate that thoroughly. How much more, when we sin on this earth and someone were to report that sin before God—whom would God consider the culprit?

In the Lord's sight, everyone in this world sins. Because

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people commit various sins by turns, over and over, the Lord knows them all. Every person living on this earth commits such sins. So if an investigation were made into who sinned, everyone would have to be investigated. And all are sinners. Just as through one man's offense many became sinners, the Lord says: you are all sinners; you have all sinned. The Lord does not say that only this person sinned and that person did not.

Then what about little children? The Lord says that even little children are all included. He says that even a newborn baby is a sinner. One may ask what sin a little child has committed. But even a little child is born with the seed of sin. Therefore we must lower ourselves before the Lord.

Like the Pharisee, one may boast of fasting twice a week, of having helped others with what was set aside through fasting and prayer, and of having tithed even while going hungry. But even if one gave everything one had, a sinner is a sinner. To such a person, on top of being a sinner bound for hell, an aggravated sin is added—the sin of challenging God is added. Whoever is caught in that sin goes to hell without even a trial. Therefore putting forward one's own righteousness is a truly fearful thing.

We must know our own state, know who God is, know how He has saved us, and accept and believe it. We must not carry on our life of faith with things vaguely picked up from hearsay, without knowing. Everyone, the life of faith must be truly rational. We must pin down accurately when, where, what, and how He did these things, and pass over none of it.

But the people of Israel, and we as well, failed to recognize the Lord. It is because we were sunk in sin. Left as we were, all of us would go to hell; therefore the Lord put on human flesh and came to this earth to save us. He promised beforehand that He would come, and when the time came, He came. And according to that promise He received baptism through John the

Baptist and took on the sins of you and me. Then, carrying those sins, He was nailed to the cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again to become our perfect Savior. The Lord tells us all this concretely.

The Lord is the holy God who does not lie

Therefore, everyone, it is all right to ask the Lord about things one by one and to examine them. It does not matter if we scrutinize in detail His being our Savior and our Shepherd. The Lord is by no means a liar. The Lord is the Creator who has truly saved you and me. The Lord cannot lie, cannot do evil, cannot do wicked things. He is One who could, but does not. For He is perfect.

You and I are weak, and there are times when we do wrong even against the desire of our hearts. But He is One who can never do so. That is why He says of Himself that He is the self-existent One and the Holy One. Can you and I introduce ourselves to others as holy people who do not sin, as people who do not sin even in their hearts? Can we say that? Only God can say those words. Only God, who has nothing at all to be ashamed of, can do so.

That is why Jesus says that He is the Savior of you and me. He says that He came as the Savior, and that He took on our sins with the baptism He received from John. He says that He was nailed to the cross in our place, received the judgment of sin, and went to His death. He also says that, as He had promised, He rose again to become our perfect Savior. Thus He says that He has become the Savior of you and me. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

When we know and believe in the Lord in this way—when

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we believe that we were bound for hell but the Lord has saved us completely—we receive true salvation. We receive the acknowledgment, *"Great is your faith."* This woman's daughter being made whole after being bound by a demon, and you and I being saved from sin, are one and the same work. Rather, being saved from sin is the greater work. However sound one's body may be, if a person has sin, he is not a normal person before God. We must believe in the Lord with the same faith as this woman and be acknowledged by God.

Then there is true reward in believing in Jesus. Without knowing oneself, how can one believe in Jesus as the Savior? However much one believes, it comes to nothing. However much one believes only in the blood of the cross, it comes to nothing. When did the Lord take on our sins? He took them on with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. When was that? Two thousand years ago from now. Then whose sins did He take on? Not only our sins but the sins of the descendants of you and me, and even the sins of our ancestors—He took them all on. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Reveal your sins before God and believe

Then why did so many people go to hell? They went because they did not know the truth. Then did they go to hell because no one told them? If they had only sought to know, would God not have sent His servants? They did not even seek God. They went to hell because they were fit for hell. Even if all people went to hell, there would be no fault on God's side. For God is a God of personhood, the One who gives us freedom.

All people are in a position to go to hell, but He has said: whoever truly does not want to go to hell, whoever wants to be

saved, believe in Me, and you will enter heaven. So the one who believes goes to heaven, and the one who does not believe goes to hell. There is no fault on God's side. Not believing is one's own fault; not seeking to know is one's own fault; not having a pure heart is one's own fault; and hiding one's own sins is one's own fault. Reveal your sins before God, and believe that God received the sins of the whole world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment for those sins on the cross, and so has saved you from sin. If you believe so, you too will be saved.

Whether you are saved or not depends on you. On God's side, He has already removed all the sins of you and me. Now, on our side, we must come before God and confess: I am a dog-like person. This is what I am. I am a person bound for hell. We must confess, acknowledge, and believe in this way. Then true salvation comes. Then our faith is acknowledged before God. Everyone, is it not so?

We desire to believe in God and abide in His love. We are not to come before God insisting and arguing, defying Him by asking whether He alone is good. Even if we have done good, we did it with the ability God gave us. What ability do we have of ourselves? Do not put forward your own rightness before God. Rather, know the rightness of God, realize our own lack all the more, and believe in the Lord and be saved. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord wants us to enter into a relationship with Him

< Matthew 15:21-28 >

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

We must enter into a relationship with the Lord to obtain salvation

How are you? Today we want to share these words, in which the Lord healed the demon-possessed daughter of the woman of Canaan. The Lord healed the daughter of this woman who lived in the region of Canaan. In that process, however, there was also

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something deeply humiliating. We can obtain salvation only by entering into a relationship with the Lord. And when we seek to enter into a relationship with the Lord, we go through exactly the same process this woman went through.

In the lives of you and me there are hardships, each our own. When hardship strikes, we think like this: Why do I have this hardship? This is something that would have been better never to have happened. It is the greatest blot on my life. If only this hardship were gone, this world would be truly worth living in. Such thoughts tend to arise when we meet hardship.

The road you traveled until you came to believe in Jesus was surely not smooth either. Before believing, there was certainly some hardship. Passing through that hardship, and while believing in the Lord, there was also no small humiliation. Only after going through all such a process do we at last receive the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

It is the same when I think back on the process by which I met the Lord. I was living an ordinary life when I came to believe in Jesus, and after that I came to know my sins. I agonized over those sins and then surrendered before the Lord. After believing in the Lord I knew my sin, and after knowing my sin I was so tormented by it that I knelt down in my heart. When I looked at the Word of God, it said, *"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23)*. It said that whoever has sin goes to hell. If so, I was the very one bound for hell. So I bent the waist of my heart and pleaded with the Lord to save me. After I did so, the Lord met me through the Word.

After He met me through the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there was truly nothing I could do. There was nothing but to believe. I was able to be saved by believing in all that the Lord had accomplished.

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"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs"

Looking at today's passage, as the Lord entered the region of Tyre and Sidon, a woman of Canaan came out and cried aloud. She cried out, *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed" (Matthew 15:22)*. She cried that her daughter was possessed by a terrible demon and was now at the point of death, pleading for her to be healed. But the Lord did not so much as glance at her. Without any answer, He simply went on His way.

So the woman shouted all the louder and pressed after the Lord. The disciples, unable to watch any longer, told this woman to be quiet. They asked how she could make such a commotion when the Lord was not even glancing at her. The disciples asked the Lord to send the woman away, and, acting in His stead, they rebuked her to drive her off. Even so, the woman did not back away but kept following hard after Him.

At last the Lord opened His mouth. He said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*. The meaning of these words is this: I am interested only in those who know they have lost God, that is, those who long to return to God. What does your daughter's being demon-possessed and sick have to do with Me? That is what the Lord was saying.

Then this woman came before the Lord, worshiped Him, and said, *"Lord, help me!" (Matthew 15:25)*. She clung to Him, asking the Christ to heal her daughter. Then the Lord spoke again. He said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Matthew 15:26)*. What humiliating words these were! He was saying that it is not right to throw to a dog the bread meant for one's child.

He put it in a roundabout way, but the meaning within was

plain. The words meant: you are a dog. To the people of Israel, calling someone a dog was the worst of insults. So the words meant: how could I give you the bread that is to go to My children?

Yet this woman did not back away but clung to Him and said, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:27)*. That is right: I am a dog. But do not even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table? She clung to Him with the heart that even those crumbs would do, if only He would bestow grace on her. Then the Lord looked at the woman and said, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire" (Matthew 15:28)*. And from that very hour her daughter was healed. What does this tell us?

There can be many ways in which we believe in the Lord. One can believe elegantly, or believe without ever bending one's own style. One can believe in Jesus and become an even more refined person. But when we seek truly to enter into a relationship with the Lord, we go through exactly the same humiliation this woman went through.

After I believed in the Savior, I came to know my sin. I came to know the law, and through the law I came to know sin. I felt the accusation of conscience over sin and agonized because of that sin. Then at last I came to acknowledge that I was one bound for hell. I too was not a person who knew all this from the beginning. You also will perhaps pass through that process of believing in Jesus, then knowing the law, and through the law coming to know sin. Believing elegantly, one's own style is shattered piece by piece, and one may even come to look more wretched than before one believed. Passing through just such a process, we come to realize before God: I am truly one bound for hell.

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It was to save someone just like me that the Lord came to this earth. The Lord received baptism from John the Baptist and took on all the sins of the world. Then He was crucified, received the judgment of those sins, and died shedding His blood. And He rose from death in three days and completed our salvation. We are saved by believing in all that the Lord accomplished, that is, in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This process is indispensable.

If you truly want to become a person related to the Lord?

This is how it is when one really seeks to enter into a relationship with the Lord. If one tries to believe only in the manner of religion, without entering into a relationship, one can become a very refined person, or a person full of his own righteousness. But when one truly believes in the Lord and seeks to become a person who has a relationship with the Lord, one's own style and one's own self completely collapse at least once.

Only after one has become utterly wretched does the Lord give salvation to such a person. In fact, it is not that the Lord makes us so. We were such beings from the start, and only after believing in the Lord do we come to know it. The Lord bestows grace on the person He sees to be such. The Lord said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12)*. He meant that He becomes the One needed only by those who are truly sinners bound for hell.

Are you really in a relationship with the Lord? This woman of Canaan, who came out to enter into a relationship with the Lord, spoke very learned words. Her first words were *"O Lord, Son of David" (Matthew 15:22)*. It means the descendant of the

king. Indeed, Jesus was born of the house of David, so even in the flesh He is of royal lineage. This woman seems to have heard much about Jesus and known about Him. Knowing this, she pleaded for her daughter, but Jesus did not so much as glance at her. If the Lord had solved only that problem, the relationship would have ended there. For when only the problem is solved, one still remains a person who has no relationship with Him.

That is why the Lord gave no answer at first, and then said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*, adding that it is not right to throw the children's bread to the dogs.

Then this woman said, do not even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table? Her heart was saying: I am a dog; but can You not bestow grace even on a dog-like woman like me? To enter truly into a relationship with the Lord, this woman lowered herself to the utmost that she could be lowered. There was nothing further to lower.

What lowering could go further than acknowledging the words that the wages of sin is death—that whoever has sin goes to hell? When the Lord's Word says that sinners go to hell, and there is sin in my heart, I acknowledge: ah, then I am one bound for hell. Once one has come down to this point, one can be lowered no further. I am a dog; yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Thus she lowered herself to the utmost that she could be lowered.

Only then did the Lord respond, saying, *"Great is your faith" (Matthew 15:28)*, and He solved the woman's problem. The Lord's coming to us is not to make us refined people or learned people. Nor is it to make us capable people or rich people.

Rather, what He truly wants in coming to us is one thing only: to enter into a relationship. No longer strangers—you are My people and I am your God; I am your Savior, and you are one

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who is saved by believing what I have accomplished. He wants to form the relationship in which the one who believes the fact that the Lord bore the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, and, to receive the judgment of that sin, was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died in my place, is His people and His child. That is exactly what the Lord wants.

The person whose outer man is broken and the person whose hardness shows itself

Believing in Jesus and putting on refined airs, or casting out demons and making a boast of one's exceptional zeal—all of it is useless. The person who has truly met the Lord is a person whose style, pride, honor, and every excellence have all been shattered. He becomes a dog completely. I am indeed a dog; I am a sinner; I am one bound for hell; whatever the Lord may say to me, I do not mind—only let the Lord save me. One comes to that state.

When we truly meet the Lord, we come to this state. Before I met the Lord my pride was strong, and so it must have been with you. Before meeting Him there was the human self—the refinement, the honor, and the aims one held—all of it. Yet in meeting the Lord, all these things are only encumbrances. It is precisely because of these that people fail to meet the Lord.

When the Lord looks at us and says, if you have sin you go to hell, we acknowledge, "That is right; I have sin, so I go to hell." The Lord is the Master and the King, and as the King speaks, so it is with us. We cannot raise the slightest objection to it. We lower ourselves completely like that. Only to the person who lowers himself completely before the Lord does the Lord grant a relationship; He solves that person's problems and makes

him His own people. And to such a person He Himself becomes God and becomes the Savior. That is why the Lord first does the work of humbling us on this earth.

Is there hardship in your life? There will be those who struggle, asking: why was I born like this, why am I in these circumstances, why does my life of faith not go well? Everyone, if you truly lower yourself, the Lord exalts you. It is because you do not come down that He leaves you as you are. If you stay lifted up like that, how can the Lord deal with you? When a person's pride is strong, he dares to try to stand shoulder to shoulder with God. Such is the person whose self has not been broken.

After I met the Lord, my outer man was completely broken. So although at times I shout and show anger outwardly, my inner man is gentle. Though outwardly I may seem to step up and contend, inside I feel no anger—why make a fuss over such a trifle? On the other hand, there are times when I grow angry at things others do not get angry about. It is when I see the soul of the other person dying. Though there seems to be no problem now, I know that if it is left as it is, that soul dies—and then anger rises in me.

The person whose outer man has been broken can meet the inner man of another person when he meets him. Even in someone outwardly very fierce and stiff, if that person has received the remission of sin, it is not the outer man but the inner man that shines through. Conversely, there are people who look gentle and kind on the outside, but from whose inside a hardness comes rushing at you. The Scripture says, *"As in water face reflects face, So a man's heart reveals the man" (Proverbs 27:19)*. When we meet and converse with each other, we can tell what the other person's inner man is like. Before I met the Lord, I could not stand it when anyone touched my pride. But now, if

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it is a matter that does no harm to the gospel, I readily bow my head even when my pride is touched. Only when it is a matter that harms the gospel do I stand firmly against it.

Only the sick need a physician

Everyone, when we stand before God, shall we face Him with our outer man and our hardness? Do we really acknowledge the words that whoever has sin goes to hell? Do we acknowledge the law, and through the law acknowledge our sin? If we truly acknowledge it, we can never be hard. Before God we can only be crushed and broken. It cannot be otherwise. That is why we cannot stand up against the Lord.

We fall flat and confess that we are truly nothing. If the Lord saves me, I am saved; if He does not save me, I go to hell; so I only await what the Lord decides concerning me. This is what it comes down to. In the person who does not believe, hardness shows itself greatly. His self-will is strong and everything about him is hard. By contrast, the born-again person, if the Lord's work goes well and the Lord's will is accomplished, is gentle as a lamb. That is the difference.

Have you ever suffered humiliation before Jesus like this woman of Canaan? Have you ever acknowledged yourself in that way? At some point you must acknowledge it, once and for all. And when it is so acknowledged, we enter into a right relationship with the Lord. Otherwise, if we remain hard and self-assured, we cannot meet the Lord even if we hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit thousands of times.

When the Lord said to the woman of Canaan that He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, it was the same as asking her: are you a lost one, or are you not one of the

self-assured? If a person is not a lost one, the Lord does not meet him. Even when we ask Him to solve the problems of our lives, there are many cases in which He does not solve them. For if He solved only that problem, even the one who had been following would follow no longer. If, before speaking of the dog-like woman, He had at once said, I will heal your daughter, and solved the problem, this woman would not have met the Lord. She would not have been broken.

Because this woman followed to the end, the Lord spoke of the dog, saying that it is not right to throw the children's bread to the dogs. When He asked, are you not a dog, she answered: "Yes, I am a dog. I am one bound for hell. In my position, about to go to hell, what does it matter whether the Lord calls me a dog or anything else? Only save me." In fact, this woman met the Lord through the matter of her daughter. The Lord works on us in the same way. I too was saved like that, and have followed Him like that until now.

Lowering oneself is not servility

In any matter that benefits the Lord, I am endlessly gentle in any situation. But before anything that harms the Lord and blocks the work of God, I step up resolutely. Once there was a matter of taking out a bank loan for a business, and the other party tried to take unfair advantage of us. At that time I did not yield to that injustice, but instead handled the matter through another channel on even better terms. Before something that unjustly hindered the work of God, I did not back down.

In this way, before anything that obstructs the work of God, I confront it justly. But when it is not such a case, I am very gentle. The Lord humbles us that far—us, who could only go to

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hell. Everyone, we were born into this earth carrying sin, through our parents. When such people as we seek to believe in God, we ourselves must come down that far to meet the Lord. The person who does not come down cannot meet the Lord. What pride does one who can only go to hell need, and what honor does he need?

Nothing is needed. Before the Lord we must bend ourselves down to this state: Lord, You are exalted, and You are the Savior. If You do not save me, I go to hell. So save me. The heart must come down to the very bottom like this. When our hearts are so, the Lord enters into a relationship with us. He makes us God's people and also makes us His workers. Otherwise, He never makes us so.

Though you may know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, how can it do while the heart is that high? Are you not one bound for hell? How then can you receive salvation in a state where the heart has not come down?—this is what He is saying. Salvation never comes that way. There are countless people in this world, but those who meet the Lord are all people who have acknowledged that they are lost sheep, people bound for hell. It is precisely those who have been treated as dogs and treated as worthless who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and meet the Lord.

Only the sick meet the Lord. If one has a disease, does one not die because of that disease? Yes. Even we who have already believed in Jesus, if we have truly met the Lord, have no such thing as pride to put forward. When I am with the children at the work site, I join them at exactly their eye level. The person who has been lowered before the great Lord can lower himself like that before people as well.

Those who have really met the Lord are different. Those who shine light on this world are different. It is because they have met the great One, and because they have knelt before the great

One. The person who knows how to kneel like that also knows how to gather his heart for the Lord. The person who has not met the great One in his heart lives holding on to his own pride. But try losing, just once, what you love. Does that pride remain intact? It all vanishes and collapses. Nothing at all remains.

The most important thing for a person is his own soul. If you go to hell, what use is anything else? What does it profit to succeed in this world, and what does it matter to fail? If it is a road we must travel anyway, in the time that remains we can only lower our hearts. When we meet that great One, we can break ourselves. To lower oneself before the Lord is by no means servile. We sometimes bend servilely even before trivial things; how then could it be shameful to acknowledge what the Lord has said, accept it, and bow before it? It is by no means a shameful thing.

I count it rather a disgrace to bend before what is not righteous. At times I even break my own heart myself. When someone else tries to break my heart, I can avoid it or manage it. But for a person to decisively break his own heart himself is truly painful—hard enough to make it difficult to breathe. To break oneself, saying, what is so great about you, you must not do that—this is a truly hard thing.

The servant who does as he is told follows the Lord

And yet, following the Lord after having met Him, is there anyone who follows without breaking himself? Though I was one bound for hell and have now met the Lord, if I do not break myself afterward, how can I follow the Lord? If I say, I am great and God is great too, so let us go side by side, consulting together, I cannot follow the Lord. The person who counts himself great

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cannot follow the Lord.

When we break ourselves even after meeting the Lord, we come to confess: Lord, I am lowly, I have no proper knowledge, and my decisions are never right; You alone are right, and Your decision alone is right. So when the Lord speaks, we simply say, that is right, and take one step after another. We leap over the wall by faith. That is how we follow the Lord. I too have followed Him that way until now and have lived that way.

We must enter into a relationship with the Lord before we believe in Him, and we must also be in a relationship with the Lord in following Him after we have believed. Only then do we become the Lord's truly saved disciples. Otherwise we cannot follow the Lord until the day He comes. Everyone, could you follow Him alone, without the church? Never. That is why mentors and teachers who build one another up are needed. Unless we fellowship together and care for one another's hearts, we cannot walk this road to the end.

Everyone, when we say a servant of the Lord, it is not a servant in name only but a servant in the literal sense. A servant is a person who does as his master tells him. Whether the work turns out as hoped or not, he does it because the master tells him to. The Lord tells us to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world, so we preach it. But how shall we preach it? At first we opened a mission hall, gathered people, and preached. But even to preach the gospel to two people a day, twenty-four hours were not enough. After straining for several years until my lips were blistered, I realized this would not do, and began literature ministry. We put the gospel of the water and the Spirit into writing, translate it, and deliver it; whether the reader accepts it or not is left as his own portion; I have delivered it, and it is enough to have done this much—so I concluded. In this way we do as we are told. Whether it prospers or not is the

next question. Only so can we follow the Lord.

Everyone, do you know how much preparation it takes to accomplish even one piece of work? Work does not get done by itself, nor is money earned by itself. Even when taking charge of one work site, one examines everything—how it should be done, whether there are dangerous spots, whether there is any risk of injury—and only then takes the first step. If one plunges in recklessly just because one knows the trade, a serious accident can happen. To accomplish one thing, one prepares thirty. Likewise, following the Lord, becoming the Lord's disciple, and receiving salvation are by no means easy things. But here there is one easy way. It is to acknowledge: You are the King and the precious One, and I am a lowly person. When the heart becomes so, it becomes easy; when it does not become so, it becomes hard.

If one strains on by force without the heart becoming so, then even though the Lord never told him to leave, he leaves the Lord of his own accord, embraces every curse, and collapses. Therefore we must set our hearts on entering rightly into a relationship with the Lord.

Do not lift up your heart before the King of kings

Have you truly entered into a relationship with the Lord and been saved? Has your heart reached that point? And after believing, are you likewise living out the relationship of a disciple's life with the Lord? Is that relationship being maintained well now? We must always keep thinking on this as we follow Him. The Lord examines the center of our hearts. He knows everything. What could we deceive Him about? One may deceive a demon, but one cannot deceive God.

Some brothers and sisters, when they meet me, cannot bear

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it even though I say nothing at all. I demand nothing and say nothing, yet they say that what is inside them is exposed every time they see me, until they cannot endure it. What is this? It is that they should acknowledge before God what is within them and lay it down, but failing to do so, they torment themselves.

Seeing us join our strength, work, and bear fruit, is there anyone who thinks it happens because we work hard? Is there anyone who thinks, we must not slacken even a little? This is not something we do. The Lord commands, and we do as commanded; the One who makes it happen is the Lord. How simple this truth is! Even earning money—it is earned because the Lord makes it possible.

I was a dog whose sins had not been washed. The woman of Canaan too was a dog in the eyes of the people of Israel. The people of Israel regarded Gentiles outside their own nation as dogs. That was their national pride. But that woman, even in that place of being a dog, sought the Lord's help.

As the Lord leads us to follow Him, if He asks, you are a woman of Canaan, you are a dog—will you still ask for My help?—then we cling to Him: Yes, I am a dog. If You do not help me, nothing works for me. Help me. I will follow You to the end. How could anyone who follows the Lord put on airs? Where is there anyone who could act great before the Lord? Though we have lowered ourselves a little, we must be lowered much further still; and though we have been thoroughly broken, we must be broken much further still.

When we truly come to know Him, how precious a One is the Lord! He is the King of kings. This universe is expanding, and all kinds of earthquakes and disasters are occurring. However much we may exalt ourselves, the Owner of this universe is Jesus. Who is the Judge? Jesus. Who is our Savior? Jesus. The One who made us, the One who saved us, and the

One who leads us is Jesus. The One who will make heaven and take us there is also Jesus. And yet do we not treat that Jesus far too lightly?

We must engrave the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on our hearts. He is the King of kings, the High Priest, and the Prophet. He teaches us all things, and He Himself resolved even our problem of sin in full by the baptism He received from John and by the cross. And as King He wants to make us His own people and save us. Is it conceivable that one made His people should step up to measure shoulders with the King of kings? To lower oneself before the Lord is the very thing the truly wise do, the thing the clever do. It is the one who knows nothing who exalts himself before the Lord. Whoever exalts himself like that will one day surely be shattered. So we must lower ourselves quickly.

The Lord makes all things work together for good through every circumstance. Even when we meet hard times, we come to see God accomplishing His will through them. Among us there was a time when two children went through difficulty, and rather through that, we could see the remaining children gathering up their faith again. Truly the Lord is a marvelous One. The work of what is bound on earth being bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth being loosed in heaven—the Lord accomplishes it through the leader. Therefore we must also relate rightly to our leader, and above all we must relate rightly to the Lord. Do not lift up your heart. In truth, what do we have that deserves to be lifted up?

While we follow the Lord there are also things we must discern. Someone boasted of his comfortable circumstances and exalted himself. But to boast of what is before one's eyes without thinking of the days ahead is a foolish thing. Another took goods by improper means and then made excuses for it all, as though the leader had ordered it. I never ordered any such

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thing. Deceiving others by unjust means is not right.

There are also people whose outward appearance and inside differ. Some look humble and gentle outwardly, but inside they are not so. Concerning such people, rather than my contending over each point in words, it is sometimes wiser to let you experience them yourselves and discern for yourselves. I do not want anyone to be ruined. I never want someone who worked with us to come to a bad end. But when I see that people depart while the hills and streams remain as they were, I feel the deep sorrow of human life.

Let us relate rightly to the Lord and follow Him until that day

The way the woman of Canaan met the Lord is exactly the same as ours. At first she took hold of the Lord and clung to Him to heal her daughter, but He did not so much as glance at her. She pleaded still more earnestly, and it was the same. Next she was treated as a dog. Nevertheless this woman acknowledged all of it. The Lord met us in the same way.

As we live on, there are many times when we feel wronged, our hearts are hurt, and we want to overturn everything. But at such times, when we stand squarely before the Lord and look, the Lord's words are right. Before people, our pride is wounded and we hate to admit it, but before God there is nothing we cannot admit. Everything the Lord has said to me is right.

Can you acknowledge, I am such a person? Before people there are times we cannot, because our feelings are hurt; yet to enter into the relationship, we acknowledge it. Let us relate rightly to the Lord, follow the Lord until the day He comes, and meet the Lord. The time of the Lord's coming is now nearly full.

The world is becoming more and more frightening. The fulfillment of God's Word is so fast that the things I once spoke of looking far ahead are appearing before our eyes one after another.

In the last era, before the Antichrist appears, a time will come when the world truly turns menacing. When the day comes that our family can hardly live on in this land, we may have to gather somewhere and live together, and then go forth when the Lord calls us. Should we not prepare our hearts even for such things? For now, however, we have made no separate preparation for it. The world is changing so very fast.

Since the time of the Lord's coming is nearly full, let us now relate rightly to the Lord, follow the Lord well day by day, and meet the Lord here. Making some resolution or vow does not make us follow Him better. Simply take this opportunity to enter into a relationship with the Lord, and also to relate rightly to your leader—engrave on your heart that this, in the end, is the way of following the Lord. Then what am I to do? Do as you are told. Do not talk back, do not object; say yes, obey, and try doing it. If there is something to ask about later, ask at that time. If you try it once like this, I believe that when we meet at the next gathering, you will have experienced many things, met the Lord anew, and enjoyed the blessing of being led. I pray that God will make it so.

We desire to be united together, all of us, and enter into a relationship with the Lord. I earnestly hope that we will relate rightly to the Lord and see the Lord on that day. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

What kind of Person do we know the Lord to be

< Matthew 15:21-28 >

"Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.' Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."

Our flesh always seeks comfort. When the weather is cold we want something warm, and when the weather is hot we want something cool. Is it not so with you? Even if no one teaches it, the flesh reacts that way at once. It wants to stay in a warm place, to drink warm soup, to eat delicious things. However hard and difficult this world is, we must live on well in the midst of it.

Whatever work we take on, to carry it out fully is truly hard.

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Our flesh always tries to chase after what is comfortable. Yet even with this weak flesh we must live looking to the Lord. Through the passage we have read today, we want to examine together what kind of Person we know the Lord to be.

The woman of Canaan comes to the Lord

Looking at the passage we read today, Jesus entered the region of Tyre and Sidon. Then a woman of Canaan came out of that region and cried out with a loud voice: *"Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed" (Matthew 15:22)*. But Jesus answered her not a word.

As the woman kept crying out, the disciples came to Jesus and urged Him: since the woman was crying out behind them, either send her away or at least say something to her. Then Jesus answered. He said, *"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)*. That is, He had come for the lost sheep among the people of Israel, and had not come to grant the request of a Gentile woman.

In the customs of that nation, the notion of not regarding Gentiles—those who were not Israelites—as fully human, but regarding them as dogs, was widespread. The woman of Canaan was a Gentile among Gentiles. Jesus too, carrying that common notion just as it was, spoke very harsh words. He said, *"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs" (Matthew 15:26)*. He was asking how she, who was not even of the people of Israel, could cry out like this.

But the woman's answer is truly amazing. The woman came and worshiped Jesus, pleading, *"Lord, help me!" (Matthew 15:25)*, and then she said, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew*

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15:27). It is true that I am a being like a dog. But do not even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table? So please have mercy on my daughter—this was her plea. At this, Jesus praised the woman's faith: *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire" (Matthew 15:28)*. And just as He had spoken, her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Jesus looks at the center of our hearts

What does this passage have to do with us? Our Lord saw what this woman said and the posture of her heart, and said that her faith was great. Jesus is the One who looks at the center of our hearts. He sees whether our hearts are truly poor before the Lord, and whether we really know the Lord rightly.

This woman accepted just as they were the words that treated her like a dog. I am indeed a dog. I am even less than a dog. Yet she clung to Him, asking whether He would not bestow grace even on such a person. When we believe in the Lord, how we know Him matters this much.

Jesus asked His disciples: who do men say that I am? Some said John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others one of the prophets of the Old Testament. In fact, even seeing Him so was to regard Jesus very highly. For in that nation the prophet held a high place, Elijah too was a high servant of God, and John the Baptist was likewise.

But Jesus is not Elijah, whom the Old Testament said would be sent, nor one of the prophets, nor John the Baptist. Then who is He? He is God. He is the God who made the universe, the God who made you and me.

He is the King of kings who made heaven and earth

He knows you and me well. For He originally made us humans within His own plan. He knows fully how weak we are, how fleshly, and how evil. And this woman recognized that very Jesus. She called out, Son of David, have mercy on me. The Son of David means the royal house.

But Jesus is not merely a prince born of a royal house in the flesh. He is not merely a prince of the greatest royal house on this earth. He is the King of kings of heaven and earth. He rules the weather at will, governs the whole world of the galaxies at will, and is the Creator who makes what is not exist and makes what exists cease to be. This woman recognized that Jesus. Even when He spoke of her as a dog, she accepted it just as it was. I am a dog. I am even less than a dog. Yet she came to Him asking whether she might not still receive grace.

When we believe in the Lord, if we know Him merely as the Savior who saved me, and no more, our faith, reverence, and love toward Him grow very weak. But when we know the Lord rightly, then to the degree that we know Him, we come to revere Him, to fear Him, to love Him, and to obey Him. Our faith is determined by how much we know.

The reason God made us weak

The Lord speaks like this: *"For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all" (Romans 11:32)*. It means that our flesh is weak, so we cannot fully obey God's will or live in step with that will.

This is not a matter of some people living up to it well and

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others failing to. It is that all human beings, every one, are like that. All people are that weak. And God has permitted it. Why did He shut up all mankind in disobedience? The purpose is precisely to show mercy. It is to take pity on us and bestow grace on us.

From the beginning, when God made man, He made him a weak being. He made him so even though He knew that he would sin. When man sinned, God came to him Himself and made tunics of skin and clothed him. What does this tell us? It tells us that He made us to be beings whom He pities as His own people, whose sins He Himself washes away, whom He makes His people, and who live with Him and enjoy wealth and glory together with Him. That is, He made us for that purpose.

And so the Lord put on human flesh and came to this earth. And He received baptism from John and took on all the sins of the world. Afterward He went about with His disciples, healing the sick and solving many people's problems. What does that tell us? He was revealing that He Himself is God. If He were not God, how could He, without even seeing the person concerned, say with a single word: great is your faith, your daughter shall be healed? And according to that word the daughter was healed. It was possible because He is God.

The compassion that pours out its heart on the deficient

Originally, a person's heart should be lowly. The person whose heart is high does not receive grace. God's compassion always comes to the lowest and most deficient. Let me give an illustration. Even when there are several dogs, people fondle only the handsome, fine-looking dog. The shabby, plain dog

they do not so much as glance at, but push it to the back.

But my heart goes rather to the dog that has been pushed aside like that—the dog that is hurting and receives no love. I go to it and stroke it, tell it, you are a lovely dog; you too can live well like the other dogs; I give it food and look after it well. A dog that has received love like that guards the house with amazing faithfulness. Just as a person pours out his heart on that deficient dog, so God pours out His heart on us, the most deficient and pitiable.

We are exactly so. We are beings so deficient and pitiable that, unless He loves us, we seem bound to be cursed and receive no favor. Such people God loves. Fearing that we would go to hell because we had sin, the Lord put on human flesh and came to this earth to resolve those sins Himself.

The Lord who saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The Lord carried out on this earth, just as it was, what He had already known and planned. He transferred His plan into practice and into action. That is, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed on to His head. By having John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptize Him, He had the sin of the world passed onto His own head.

And after receiving all those sins, He went carrying the sin of the world, received the judgment on the cross, and died shedding His blood. Then in three days He rose again from death and proclaimed: I have saved you like this. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus saved us fully by the baptism He received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection.

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Therefore do not be afraid now. Do not feel wretched. We can live well, live gloriously, and live forever. We can go without tasting death forever. The Lord came to you and me as that very Savior. He came to the nation of Israel that way, and today He has come to you and me like this, through this Word of God.

The poor in heart receive grace

If our hearts are poor and we know that God so exalted—the One who created heaven and earth—has pitied us and is the One who has given us this salvation, eternal life, love, and blessing, we can never take Him lightly. We come to know: if You bestow grace, I am one who receives that love; and if You cast me off, I am one to be cursed forever.

This woman cried out: Son of David, have mercy on me. Whoever comes before God, before our Lord Jesus, pleading to be pitied, God pities. But the one who comes before the Lord and still says, what difference is there between You and me, does not receive that love. Jacob received love, and Esau received hatred. Those who live by their own strength, ability, and stubbornness were all cast off.

But the person who knows that he is deficient, who knows that he cannot live unless he receives mercy, and who knows that the One he has met is no ordinary creature but the Creator who made heaven and earth, the Savior, the One abundant in power—because his heart is so, he receives pity, receives love, and is looked upon with favor. That is, he receives eternal life and salvation.

The Lord who makes us His workers and glorifies us

What are the hearts of you and me like? Are we not perhaps those who are thankful to Jesus for saving us, but find it displeasing that the Lord afterward asks anything of us? The Lord gives us work so that we will not become idlers. He entrusts God's work to us so that we may live with self-respect, live sharing with others, and live sharing the love of God.

We are originally mere creatures, deficient beings no different from dogs. Indeed, precisely because we were born as humans, the person whose heart is high comes to stand in an even more cursed place. Man knows instinctively that there is eternal life and that there is an eternal world, and he knows that there is a place where he will go and live. If, even so, he becomes a being who receives no pity from Jesus, how futile is that! Therefore we must lower our hearts, exalt Him, praise Him, and believe, and so receive blessing. Everyone, do you believe?

There is no difference between this woman and us. But this woman of Canaan received pity. I too was born, met the Lord, and received pity. We were people who were only stubborn, whose deficiencies were beyond telling. I too lived a rough and wild life in my young days. Wherever I went I shoved others aside and quarreled, trying to dominate by my own strength. I was one who raised his voice, saying, let me too get something to eat and live.

Such a person as me the Lord met. Even talking big like this is in fact nothing at all. When a person grows old and looks back on the life he has passed through, what is there to boast of? When we tell old stories, exaggeration attaches itself to our words. That is why man's words are so untrustworthy. You too, if you talk long, will inflate things without realizing it. We are beings

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imperfect like that. Yet the Lord pities us and loves us.

To the one who comes praying, pleading to be pitied and to be helped, the Lord answers. However much we ask people, people have no power. Even if a person loves a person, when the one he loves reaches a truly wretched state, can he solve that problem? When someone is dying of cancer, can a person solve it? When the debts are overwhelming, can a person solve it? He cannot. But Jesus can. For He is the Creator and God. That is why we believe in the baptism Jesus received from John and in the cross, call Him our Savior, and ask Him for help.

God exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but God the Father has never been seen by our eyes, and God the Holy Spirit also has come upon us as Spirit. Only Jesus, God the Son, put on human flesh and showed Himself to us. Therefore, looking at Jesus, we come to know what kind of Being God is. God is abundant in power, abounding in love, and One who pities us. But the arrogant who oppose God and try to stand against Him, He puts down with ease. The One who governs all these things is Jesus.

The life that knows the Lord rightly, believes, and follows

We are now living having received Jesus' pity. It is not because we are somehow excellent that Jesus loves us. He had compassion on us because we were so pitiable. Because, if left alone, we would go to hell, be cursed, and become wretched—that is why He loved us, came to us, and met us. Therefore, through this Word we must know that the Lord is such a One, and believe and follow Him as we live.

When we live following the Lord well, countless people

come to experience the love of Jesus through us. Through the literature ministry, even now countless people of the world are coming to know who Jesus is. That happens because we met the Lord first. Those who have met the Lord ahead of others do not store up wealth for themselves; they put everything in the Lord's storehouse and use it for the Lord. For He is worthy to receive such honor, and His will toward us is exactly that.

The Lord glorifies us. When we have lived on this earth and the Lord calls us, we will enter His kingdom and live gloriously with God forever. I believe that fact. You too, believe this fact. But the people of Israel did not receive Jesus. They did not know that He was God, so abundant in power. Seeing with their own eyes, they still did not believe, and instead cried out for Him to be crucified. And so for long ages they were scattered over the whole world and lived despised. It was because of that sin of opposing Jesus. Everyone, opposing Jesus is an eternal curse.

Therefore the place where we must be careful is precisely before Jesus. Receiving His love, by His grace and by faith we must live before the Lord praising and giving thanks. The Lord came to us—truly deficient, able to live only if pitied—called us, saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and also made us His workers. I believe that we will live on this earth under God's protection, living for others, and that when the time comes, the Lord will call us and glorify us forever. We can only give thanks. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

God who saved lost souls

< Matthew 15:29-39 >

"Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. Now Jesus called His disciples to Himself and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.' Then His disciples said to Him, 'Where could we get enough bread in the wilderness to fill such a great multitude?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' And they said, 'Seven, and a few little fish.' So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And He sent away the multitude, got into the boat, and came to the region of Magdala."

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Today we held a book exhibition and preached the gospel. Today also several souls heard the gospel and received the remission of sin. Among them, one truly lost soul returned. That sister had attended a campus mission organization and then graduated, but the sin in her heart remained as it was, and so, she said, she quit church altogether. Then, thinking she might at least look at some books, she came to the exhibition, and while talking with one of our sisters she came to hear even the gospel and received the remission of sin.

Besides her, there was a soul with whom one brother had fellowship. That soul said the gospel was right, yet his eyes were not yet opened and he had many other desires, so they only talked a little. He said that he greatly prefers churches of small size. He could not understand at all, he said, how churches today only build large chapels, and when the membership grows, buy big cars and build the chapel still larger. Even so, that soul took several books and heard the gospel, and children also came and heard the gospel. In this way several souls preached the gospel, and others heard it.

In this last time, what a thankful thing it is to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit! Among so many people, what a thankful thing it is that one truly lost soul comes, hears the gospel, and receives the remission of sin! Every time we hold a book exhibition, we see that a few souls receive the remission of sin without fail.

In other regions as well, many souls are meeting the gospel through the book exhibitions. One brother brought a young woman attending graduate school and talked with her. That sister was said to be so kind that people called her an angel, yet she said she did not really know sin; so he taught her today what sin is. Even a person who counted herself a good person realizes that she is a sinner, and I believe she will now become righteous.

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Today I met a soul after a long while. That soul said he was still only trying things out, with the thought that he might accept the gospel only when he was about to die. Still, keeping the chapel day by day and meeting souls like this—how joyful it is! I have the heart that it would be truly good if I could take a single table to a country village, set out the display, and preach the gospel. I sincerely thank our Lord for letting several souls hear the gospel and for saving one lost soul.

All who met the Lord were healed

Today we have looked together at the words of Matthew chapter 15, from verse 29 onward. When our Lord went up on the mountain and sat down, great multitudes came, bringing the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many other sick people. They laid them at Jesus' feet, and the Lord healed them. The Scripture records it like this.

"So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matthew 15:31)

Those who met our Lord were all healed completely like this. The lame came to walk, the blind opened their eyes and saw, and the mute came to speak. When the Lord went up on the mountain and sat down, the multitude brought the sick to Him, and great crowds came before Jesus, heard the Word, saw the miracles, and heard the words of heaven.

He feeds four thousand with seven loaves and a few little fish

Now the day grew late and it was time for them to return home. But our Lord was concerned that if He sent this multitude away as they were, they would faint on the way. When the Lord told His disciples to feed the multitude, the disciples asked: where in this wilderness could they get bread enough to fill such a multitude?

Jesus asked, *"How many loaves do you have?"* and the disciples answered, *"Seven, and a few little fish" (Matthew 15:34).*

Then Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground, took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke them, and gave them to the disciples. The disciples distributed them to the multitude. Seven loaves and a few little fish were a small amount, just about right for one person to eat. But when the Lord laid His hands on them, gave thanks, and broke and distributed them, the whole multitude ate and was filled.

The Scripture does not record that scene in full detail. But it is clear that as the Lord broke the bread and gave it, the bread lay heaped up high in every basket. The Scripture records that He broke and gave to the disciples, and the disciples distributed to the multitude.

Even after all had eaten, seven large baskets remained

"So they all ate and were filled, and they took up seven large baskets full of the fragments that were left. Now those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children"

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(Matthew 15:37–38). Since the men alone were four thousand, adding the women and children it must have been a great multitude of more than ten thousand.

Our Lord took seven loaves and two fish, gave thanks, and fed that whole great multitude. And even then, the leftover fragments filled seven large baskets. What do these words show? They show how abundant the grace of God is.

Jesus bore all sins with the baptism He received from John

Our Lord took on the sins of every person in the whole world. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed on to Him and washed them all away, and by receiving on the cross, in our place, the judgment for those sins, He saved all people from the punishment. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Not a single person is excluded from this grace. Those who have met our Lord and those who have not yet met Him—God has blessed them all and removed all those sins.

With seven loaves and a few little fish, a multitude of more than ten thousand ate, and seven large baskets remained. In the same way, even after all the people of the whole world receive the remission of sin through the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood He shed on the cross, God's grace of the remission of sin still remains in abundance. We preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit. We preach it through literature, and through overseas missions and domestic missions. We never worry that God's grace might fall short and fail to remove someone's sins. Whoever simply comes—Jesus has already remitted all his sins.

Anyone can be saved abundantly

Whoever it may be—a person who has truly sinned much, or a person who once believed in Jesus and gave up along the way—Jesus has remitted all their sins. Even the sins of the person who, not yet awakened to it, puts it off, saying he will give it a thought only when he is about to die, the Lord has already abundantly removed. The words that He gave thanks over the seven loaves and two fish, fed the whole multitude, and had seven large baskets left over show that this salvation of God abundantly removes the sins of all the people of the whole world, and that His grace still remains to spare. Therefore we can preach the gospel abundantly—in China, in Japan, in Taiwan, in Russia, anywhere in the whole world.

All people can receive the remission of sin. It is the same with young students. Today several elementary school students came, heard the gospel, and received the remission of sin. When asked who passed the sins on to Jesus, those children answered at once: John the Baptist. The moment they were asked, they answered more clearly than an adult who had been taught for a whole year. The truth that Jesus bore the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John—those young hearts received it as the truth, just as it is. I truly understand why Jesus loved little children. How admirable are the hearts that simply believe the Word of God just as it is!

We must have a holy ambition for this work of saving souls. We must believe the fact that even after all people are saved, grace still remains. Our Lord fed that multitude with two fish and seven loaves and left seven large baskets over. The grace of God has come abundantly to every sinner through God's Church. The grace by which every sinner receives the remission of his sins cleanly through the water and the blood, becomes righteous

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before God, and becomes God's child—that grace was abundant.

The salvation distributed through God's Church

Then how does God accomplish this salvation? God works through God's Church. These fish signify the saints, that is, the church. In the old days the saints of the early Church could not freely share their testimony even when they met. So they drew a fish on the ground and made it the secret sign by which to recognize that a person was born again. The very word fish represents our salvation and our faith in Jesus Christ.

Where is the place in which God feeds all the people of this earth the food of salvation and distributes the abundant grace of the remission of sin that saves them from sin? It is the church. It is God's Church. God works in God's Church. And the seven loaves and the seven baskets—this number seven in the Scriptures always points to God and points to perfection. God distributes His perfect grace of salvation through the church.

Our Lord laid His hands on the two fish and the seven loaves and gave thanks. That is, He blessed them. Because that blessing was there, all people came to be able to receive and eat this perfect food of life through the church and obtain life. Therefore we can preach this abundant gospel of salvation to all the people of the whole world. For Jesus has already given thanks, and has already removed all sins. However the generations change, and however a climate of not believing in Jesus is formed, if we go to those souls and set the work going, God gathers those souls, saves them, and blesses them. Because He has already given thanks, when we work with faith, all the people of the whole world hear this gospel and are saved.

When we first began the book exhibitions, other

organizations laughed at us a great deal. They said we had spread our table right beside the places they had set up. But we did not mind. We established a publishing company and brought out books, laid the booklets out neatly in front, and preached the gospel.

In the old days there was no combined volume, so we spread the booklets out on the ground, attaching the titles one by one, and preached. In those days there were many who were delighted with even a single booklet, asking if we were really giving it away free. There was a time when we were despised like that, but these days, among the many mission organizations, the places where we alone remain and preach the gospel have become many. We always preach the gospel openly and fairly, with it laid out in plain view.

Other groups make pizza to sell, or bake things to sell, to turn the money into offerings. Rather than striving like that, it is better to work for a few days and serve the Lord with the wages. If that money is spent in the right place, I too am glad to help. But the most important thing is serving this gospel. Even in these two days, several souls have been saved. The reward of having made books for this work is truly great.

We can preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to everyone. Everyone can be saved. All the people of the whole world can be saved. I believe that. I believe that those who are saved will become tremendously many in the days ahead.

I will now begin, step by step. We are preparing to put our sermons on the Internet, and we are preparing the literature ministry as well. We are preparing overseas missions and domestic missions, and the work of establishing churches all over the world. We have already opened one Christian bookstore, and we intend to open Christian bookstores in each of the regions where there is a church. I believe God will save all souls. In the

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last days, the souls who hear this gospel and receive the remission of sin will become still more numerous.

Like that sister and the little children today, whoever hears this Word confesses that it is so clear. It is because they have never heard such words before. It is the same whether a person has believed in Jesus much or little. If there had been words this clear, they would have believed from the beginning. Truly our God has saved all people abundantly. And that grace of salvation remains in seven large baskets. There are still many people who have not been saved, but they too can all be saved.

Some people come and take several books each, and some pay the full price and take them. Seeing such scenes warms my heart. People say Christianity is now in decline, but the moment we spread our table, the customers crowd in. Whatever anyone says, when we spread the table, people come. All the people of the whole world can be saved. They can be saved abundantly.

When I tried to give a book to one pastor, he would not take it, perhaps because of his dignity. But when I gave the book to his wife, who had come with him, she was truly glad. In fact, such a person is more likely to receive the remission of sin. The grace of God comes abundantly to people whose hearts are open like that.

The grace of God is still shining unchanged on all people

Without a single person left out, the grace of God has come abundantly to all people. Only, because they walk with their backs turned toward the sun, they fail to receive its light. They should receive the sun into their hearts, but because they have turned around and walk with their backs to it, they simply fail to

receive the remission of sin.

Long ago an evangelist, preaching the gospel, proclaimed that Jesus had taken away all sins. But a certain young man stood up, said he could not possibly believe it, and walked out in the middle of the meeting. Then that evangelist said this: you have turned away, but the sun is still shining on your back. The grace of God is still shining unchanged on all people. On God's side, He has already saved every person, whoever he may be. It is not that God has separated in advance those who will be saved from those who will not. He has saved them all.

Then what is the problem? It is that people do not know the fact that they are lost. It is because there is evil in their hearts, because they are worldly, love the world, and do not love the truth. For such reasons they simply fail to be saved. Whoever truly loves God in his heart and accepts the truth of salvation is saved abundantly. And even then, the grace of God remains in abundance. Even after saving us, God leaves His grace and blessing over in abundance.

The road we have traveled preaching the gospel

Looking back on past days, before I had yet made books, I went around many universities, laying out literature and preaching the gospel. Once a brother introduced someone to me, saying this was a soul who worked with him. But when I tried to talk with that soul, something kept interfering. We moved to a noisy restaurant and sat down, and the surroundings were so loud that I had to shout the gospel until my voice went hoarse. Later I heard that at the time he understood nothing of what was said. But that soul afterward truly heard the Word and was saved, and is now doing an excellent ministry. Having eaten the bread and

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fish that Jesus gives, he became a servant of God.

Truly, in those days we tasted much of the joy of preaching the gospel. The many brothers and sisters sitting in this place now are also souls who were connected and saved in that way. It was a time when we did not even have a proper combined volume and preached with booklets, attaching the titles; but how open and proud we were! We preached the gospel even with photocopies, not printed books.

I still see a tract we pasted on a utility pole in those days, not yet fallen off. More than five years have passed, and it is still there. So firmly did we paste it on. That is how much we preached the gospel with all our strength.

Once there was a soul who always carried a soccer ball around, so I supposed he must kick well. I called him over, embraced him, and preached the gospel, and he received the remission of sin. I suggested we kick the ball together sometime, but in fact he could not kick well at all. Seeing that, I thought it was like a student who has fallen behind in his studies always carrying a heavy book bag around. But that soul too received the remission of sin on the spot.

After that, for a while I stayed shut up in a room, making books. I polished the manuscripts diligently, again and again. My eyes only ached and my head only ached. When I think of what has passed, there is much to be ashamed of as well. But because Jesus has remitted everything—all those sins—I am very bold.

At times, seeing how this age is turning, my heart grows dark, wondering whether people can really be saved. But God has blessed all these souls. Seven large baskets remained; those who are to be saved are saved abundantly, and that grace still remains abundantly even now. The time of the grace of salvation has not all passed away. There are still many people in the whole world

who are to receive this salvation. Therefore we need not sink into our own weakness. Our God desires to save all people abundantly, and He has already saved them all.

We must embrace God's heart and have ambition for the work of saving every soul. We must preach the gospel with the faith that all people can be saved. We translate the gospel into their languages and preach it in China and in Taiwan as well. One brother and another brother joined strength and brought out a book translated into Chinese. We do not even know Chinese characters properly, yet that book came out—this is truly the grace of God. These days we are also preparing to translate into Japanese. Machine translation has its limits, so it is a work that cannot be accomplished apart from that grace.

Today too we went out, met souls, and had fellowship with them and looked after them. How exciting it was—so refreshing! When many of us sit around together in one group like this, souls come and take the books so very readily. We need not be treated to anything. Even if you only come out and keep that place with us, souls approach boldly and hear the gospel. I hope that you also will come out and take part in this work together.

Now all the other stalls have closed their doors, and the stall displaying books is ours alone. It is like the one house that opened its doors on the day all the other shops were closed, and the customers crowd into it. So it is in this last time as well. People crowd in, asking how one receives the remission of sin and what happens when one receives it, asking us to preach the gospel to them. Once a professor said he knew Chinese characters well and asked whether we had a book written in Chinese. Knowing this would happen, we had made one in advance and handed it to him. It was a book entirely in Chinese characters from beginning to end.

When an American comes, we give him a book in English;

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and now we will prepare Japanese and Russian as well and hand one to everyone who comes. We have also established a church in Busan, and they say many people coming from Japan arrive at that port. We hand out the books translated into Russian as well, one by one. We can deliver the gospel to every one of our souls. And every soul can be saved. Truly abundantly—seven large baskets remain.

Let us pray together that we too may open a Christian bookstore. Asking God to open a good location, let us obtain a shop and open a bookstore. I believe God will surely bring it to pass.

Whoever truly seeks receives the remission of sin on hearing it only once

The disciples distributed to the multitude, and all ate and were filled, and the leftover fragments were gathered, filling seven large baskets. In the same way, I believe that until the day this earth ends, God will let every soul come into contact with this gospel of the water and the blood. Whoever truly wants to receive the remission of sin will all receive it. Whether in the north country or in Russia, in Canada or in Brazil, anywhere on the American continents, I believe that in this last era He will let everyone who seeks, longing to meet the truth, meet it. Everyone, do you believe?

The sister who was saved today was also one who had attended a campus mission organization. The Sunday school students, and the children now attending church, also came, heard it just once, and received the remission of sin. This is not merely a story on the level of: believe in the blood of the cross, and you are saved by faith. This gospel of the water and the Spirit,

heard properly even once, is salvation.

Whoever truly seeks will seize it upon hearing it only once. If one's mind is even slightly awake, hearing it once means salvation. Did you not also receive salvation on properly hearing it once? It is only because there are many other things in the heart; if one comes to one's senses and hears it properly just once, it is the remission of sin. There is no need to hear it twice. Hearing it properly once is the eternal remission of sin. Through the water and the blood, those sins vanish completely.

The more the last days advance, the more we must preach the gospel

We must live in this last era holding this ambition. At school and at the workplace, we must live with a truly great vision. Looking at what many mission organizations do today, they stop at making food to sell and turning it into offerings, or at handing out small coin banks to help our compatriots in the North. Of course we too must truly give offerings for our compatriots. But I believe that above all, the offering given to serve this gospel is the true offering. The world runs noodle factories to feed people, but we must run the factory of the gospel and cause people to meet our Lord.

Before long our Lord will come. This age has now gone so far as to permit experiments in human cloning—man making man. The great powers bind themselves together in military pacts, and the many nations of Europe are being bound into one, seeking to unify their currency. When the value of money is unified, people can be controlled, and the time comes when everyone must carry an electronic identification at all times. This means that the talk of stamping a mark on the right hand or the

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forehead has drawn near.

Thus the whole world is turning at great speed. Therefore the work of preaching the gospel is urgent. Within this time we must preach the gospel intently. When this time has passed, the gospel will no longer be able to be preached. People's minds are now filled with the thought that someday nation will be united with nation, religion united with religion, and Christianity too all united without denominations. But we can never join with them. Those who are saved cannot go the same way with them.

When the last time comes, for those who are not saved the way of death opens all the wider, while those who have received the remission of sin will only have some hardship for a little while. When the great tribulation strikes, people will dig up the sins they had buried, be at a loss, and seek true help. To whom will they come then? Realizing that all they had believed so long was empty, they will in the end come to us, who preach the true truth.

People these days, thinking there is nothing true anywhere, rather go peering into strange places. But the only ones who clearly proclaim being born again of water and the Spirit, the Millennial Kingdom, the secret of the remission of sin, and becoming righteous, are we alone. Even the titles of our books are all distinctive. They are titles not found in ordinary Christian bookstores. Therefore in this last time people will in the end come to us, who proclaim this truth.

I believe that this gospel will be preached at least once to every person in the whole world. I live by that faith. You too must live by that faith. We must not be people who just sit waiting for the end of this earth to come. We must go forward positively before God, and go out toward souls. We must preach the gospel of the water and the blood to everyone. Our God has already given thanks over this gospel of the water and the blood.

Therefore whoever simply eats of it obtains eternal life. People are saved abundantly, become God's children abundantly, and obtain eternal life abundantly.

Let us live with ambition for the salvation of souls

We have made books and preached the gospel with them. When I first said I would make a hundred kinds of books, there may have been some who laughed inwardly. But in little more than a year, the thirty-sixth book has come out. If we say we will make a hundred kinds, we make them. If we say we will preach the gospel to the whole world, we preach it. Black or white or yellow, if God says He will save them, He saves them. I believe that. God has told us to preach the gospel to the whole world, so I believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit will be preached and that those people will be saved abundantly.

Just wait a little. In another two years, ordinary pastors too will be speaking of the gospel of the water and the blood. Our books are going out even now. Five years ago, when I came to this place, no one called a believer righteous. But now, if anything, two out of three say that whoever believes in Jesus is righteous. Yet that alone is no longer enough. In a little while they will come to say that we have been saved through the water and the blood. It means that the people actually saved will grow that numerous.

Our Lord gave thanks. This is not the five loaves and two fish, but the giving of thanks over the seven loaves and two fish. In the Scriptures this is another, separate event. With that small amount, more than ten thousand people ate, and seven large baskets remained. In the same way, all the people of this whole earth will hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and even

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after all who are to be saved have been saved, seven large baskets will remain in abundance. Therefore in this last era we must preach the gospel with faith. At school and at the workplace, with ambition, we must preach the gospel clearly to all the people of the whole world.

Above all, we must be wholly seized by the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. I earnestly hope that our young brothers and sisters will soon form families and preach the gospel. Only, it is the person whose heart is seized by preaching the gospel who serves the Lord with that zeal even after marrying. If one is bound only to the thoughts of the flesh, without earnestness for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one falls the more into the flesh even after marrying. So we must examine well whether this earnestness is present or not.

If we try to do it by our own strength alone, nothing comes of it. We must pour our whole heart only into serving the gospel. If we are this earnest in preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, will not God also delight in such people as us and bless us? Though we have no ambition for other things, in preaching this gospel and doing the work of God we must surely have ambition. In just a little while, He who is coming will come. Let us serve the gospel with all our heart and meet our Lord.

Everyone, do you believe? God saves all those who are to be saved. Holding this faith and this ambition, we must live the life of faith. Believing in God who saves abundantly, let us preach the gospel today and tomorrow, and go forward. I will close the message here. ✉

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CHAPTER

16

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Matthew Chapter 16

< Matthew 16:1-28 >

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' And He left them and departed. Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So

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they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.'"

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1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 16 is the chapter that teaches the faith that knows rightly who Jesus is, the salvation that Christ would accomplish through the baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection, and the way of the disciple who follows Him.

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign, but they did not see the work of God that had already appeared. The disciples, though they had experienced the power of Jesus, worried about having no bread. Peter rightly confessed Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, but immediately afterward he was severely rebuked for trying to stop Jesus' cross.

Confessing Jesus rightly with the lips alone is not enough. We must know what kind of Christ Jesus is. Jesus is not a political Messiah who brings glory without suffering, but the Christ who accomplishes salvation by being killed and rising again on the third day. Therefore His disciple must also deny his own thoughts and desires and follow the Lord's way.

1. The Pharisees and Sadducees who demanded a sign from heaven (verses 1–4)

The Pharisees and Sadducees differed from each other in their theological positions, but they joined together in opposing Jesus. To test Jesus, they demanded that He show them a sign from heaven.

They demanded a sign not because they wanted to believe in Jesus. Jesus had already healed the sick, cast out demons, and performed the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and a few small fish. Though they had seen sufficient evidence, they did not believe, and they demanded a sign in the manner they themselves had determined.

Jesus rebuked them because they could predict the weather by looking at the state of the sky, yet they could not discern *"the signs of the times."* The Son of God had come and was healing the sick and preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, but because of their own prejudice they failed to recognize the work of salvation that God was carrying out.

Jesus said that there was nothing to show a wicked and adulterous generation except the sign of Jonah. It means that, like the event in which Jonah was in the belly of the great fish and came out, Jesus' being killed and rising again on the third day would be the most decisive sign.

When Jesus told His disciples not yet to tell anyone that He was the Christ, it did not mean that the gospel was never to be preached. In those days people expected the Messiah to be a political king who would liberate Israel from the rule of Rome. Until Jesus was judged on the cross for the sins He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John and rose again, people could easily misunderstand what kind of Christ Jesus was.

2. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees (verses 5–12)

The disciples forgot to bring bread as they went to the other side. At that time Jesus told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But the disciples thought that Jesus was pointing out that they had not prepared bread.

Jesus reminded the disciples that they had already experienced the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and two fish. He told them to remember that He had fed five thousand with five loaves and left twelve baskets, and fed four thousand with seven loaves and left seven large baskets.

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The disciples' problem did not lie in their failure to bring bread. It lay in the fact that, though they had experienced the power of Jesus, they looked at the lack before their eyes and worried again. If we do not remember the grace the Lord has bestowed in the past, our faith can be shaken even before a small problem.

The leaven Jesus spoke of was not the leaven of actual bread but the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Just as leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough, wrong teaching also influences the whole of a person's thinking and faith.

The Pharisees put forward human tradition and their own righteousness and emphasized outward religious forms. The Sadducees denied the resurrection and the spiritual world and reduced the word of God to a worldly way of thinking. Though they looked different on the outside, both teachings kept people from believing in Jesus rightly.

A believer must not be satisfied merely with listening eagerly. He must discern what he is listening to. We must examine not the position or popularity of the person who delivers a teaching, but whether that teaching agrees with the word of God and the gospel of Jesus.

3. *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"* (verses 13–14)

In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples who men said that the Son of Man was. The disciples answered that some thought He was John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.

People evaluated Jesus as a very great figure. But knowing Him as one of the great prophets is not knowing Jesus rightly. Jesus is not a servant of God like John the Baptist or Elijah; He is the Christ whom those servants testified about and waited for.

Knowing the world's assessment of Jesus and believing in Jesus personally are different. Jesus did not finish by asking His disciples only about other people's thoughts. He asked a more direct and important question.

4. *"Who do you say that I am?"* (verses 15–17)

When Jesus asked, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

"Christ" means the Messiah anointed by God. Jesus is the King whom God promised, and the One who saves sinners. Moreover, Jesus is not a mere man but the Son of the living God.

Jesus said that Peter was blessed, and that the One who had made this known to him was not flesh and blood but His Father in heaven. The true identity of Jesus cannot be known by human wisdom or public opinion alone. God must make it known through His Word.

However, the word that God makes it known does not mean that a person need not think or learn the Word. Peter had heard Jesus' words, experienced His miracles, and lived with Him. Through all that process, God led Peter to confess Jesus rightly.

This question is important today as well. Knowing Jesus only as an excellent teacher or a religious leader who taught love is entirely different from believing in Him as the Christ who saves me and as the Son of the living God.

5. The church built on the rock (verse 18)

Jesus said to Peter, *"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* This is the important part where the word *"church"* appears for the first time in the Gospel of Matthew.

The rock here refers not to Peter's person or position as an individual, but to the faith Peter confessed, that is, the faith that

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believes in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of the living God. Jesus did not say that He would build His church on Peter's human character or ability; He said that He would build His church on his right faith, which God had made known to him. Peter is the representative disciple who confessed Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, and Jesus builds His church on that revealed faith.

The word Christ carries the meaning that Jesus is the King of kings, the High Priest of heaven, and the true Prophet who makes known the will of God. Jesus is God, and to save sinners He came in the flesh, received all the sins of the people of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the cross, and rose again from the dead. Believing in this Jesus as one's own God and Savior is Peter's rocklike faith.

What is important is the fact that the owner of the church is not Peter or any other person but Jesus. Jesus said, *"On this rock I will build My church."* The church is not an organization built on human ability and fame; it is the assembly of saints who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel that Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection.

The word that *"the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* does not mean that the church suffers no hardship in the world. The church may experience persecution and death, but the power of Satan and death cannot destroy the faith of the saints who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Satan can accuse the saints and persecute the church, but he cannot nullify the salvation Jesus completed through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, nor can he stop the preaching of the gospel through

the church.

6. The keys of the kingdom of heaven and the authority to bind and loose (verses 19–20)

Jesus told Peter that He would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and that what was bound and loosed on earth would also be bound and loosed in heaven.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven are not a power by which Peter as an individual decides people's salvation and destruction according to his own will. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ completed. Jesus received all the sins of the people of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was judged on the cross, and rose again from the dead, completing salvation.

The church must deliver to the world this key of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who hears and believes this gospel is loosed from all sins and enters the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does not accept it remains bound in his sins. The authority to bind and loose on earth is not the church's authority to decide sin and salvation by human thinking; it is the authority to preach the gospel of the remission of sin that God has completed, so that sinners may enter the kingdom of heaven by faith.

When Jesus told His disciples not yet to tell anyone that He was the Christ, it did not mean that the gospel was never to be preached. In those days people expected the Messiah to be a political king who would liberate Israel from the rule of Rome. Before the cross and the resurrection were accomplished, people could easily misunderstand what kind of Christ Jesus was.

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7. Jesus speaks plainly for the first time of His suffering, death, and resurrection (verse 21)

After Peter's confession of faith, Jesus began for the first time to teach plainly that He must go up to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the religious leaders, be killed, and rise again on the third day.

This is an important turning point in the Gospel of Matthew. If the earlier part emphasized who Jesus is, from this point on the emphasis falls on what the Christ must do. Jesus does not avoid suffering because He is the Christ; rather, because He is the Christ, He must suffer, die, and rise again to save sinners.

The baptism He received from John, the cross, and the resurrection were not a tragedy that happened by chance but the plan of salvation God had established. People wanted a glorious Messiah, but the Messiah God sent first bears the sin of the world, suffers, overcomes death, and then enters into glory.

8. Peter, who tried to stop Jesus' cross (verses 22–23)

Peter took hold of Jesus and said, *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* He loved Jesus and may have wanted to protect Him. But blocking Jesus' cross was blocking God's plan of salvation.

Jesus rebuked Peter very sternly, saying, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* A little earlier He had praised Peter's confession, but now He said that Peter was mindful not of the things of God but of the things of men.

Even a person who has made a right confession of faith can hinder the work of God if he is caught up in his own thoughts. Peter confessed Jesus' identity rightly, but he had not yet accepted the way in which Jesus would save.

Man's thinking wants glory without suffering and victory without sacrifice. But the work of God is that Jesus takes the sin

of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, dies on the cross, and rises again to save sinners. If Jesus' baptism and cross are left out, even a confession about Christ cannot be complete.

The rebuke *"Satan"* does not mean that Peter himself as a person was Satan. It was because at that moment Peter's words were in the same direction as Satan's temptation to turn Jesus back from the way of the cross.

9. The way of the disciple who denies himself and takes up his cross (verses 24–25)

Jesus said that whoever desires to come after Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.

Denying oneself does not mean hating one's own existence or erasing one's personality. It means laying down the attitude that makes one's own thoughts and desires the final standard of life and acknowledging Jesus as one's Master. It is like Peter, who had to accept that the Lord's will was right, even though in his own thinking Jesus' cross did not seem right.

One's own cross does not simply refer to every inconvenience and hardship experienced in daily life. In those days the cross was an instrument of death and shame. It means following Jesus with the resolve to endure loss, rejection, and suffering for the sake of loyalty to Him, and to lay down even one's life if necessary.

However, the cross a disciple bears does not replace or supplement Jesus' work of redemption. Jesus' cross is the only cross that saves sinners, and the disciple's cross is the path of obedience on which a person who has already been saved walks in loyalty to the Lord.

If a person makes preserving his own life his most important goal and forsakes Jesus, he ends up losing true life. Conversely,

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the person who lays down his life for Jesus comes to obtain eternal life in God.

10. The life more precious than the whole world and the last judgment (verses 26–28)

Jesus said that it profits a man nothing if he gains the whole world and loses his own life. Even if we gain all the wealth, power, and honor of the world, if we lose eternal life, in the end we have gained nothing.

People sacrifice many things for money and success, but a lost life cannot be bought back with anything in the world. Therefore, more important than what we have gained and possessed is to whom we belong and what life we have.

Jesus said that He would come in the future in the glory of His Father with His angels and reward each person according to what he has done. Jesus came as a suffering Servant, but in the end He comes as the glorious King and Judge.

The word that He will *"reward each according to his works"* means that a person's deeds reveal the faith and loyalty of his heart. Whether we said we believed in Jesus while actually living only for the world, or followed the Lord and offered our lives, will be revealed at the end.

In verse 28 Jesus said that there were some standing there who would see the Son of Man coming with His royal authority before they died. In the nearest context, this can be understood as referring to the event on the Mount of Transfiguration in the next chapter, where Peter, James, and John would see Jesus' glory in advance. More broadly, it can also be understood as a word looking ahead to Jesus' resurrection and the manifestation of the power of the kingdom of God.

The core meaning of Matthew Chapter 16

Matthew chapter 16 asks each person, "Whom do you believe Jesus to be?" The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign yet did not believe in Jesus, and people thought of Jesus as merely one of the great prophets. But Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ and the Son of the living God.

But a right confession must lead to an understanding of the cross and the resurrection. Even Peter, right after confessing Jesus as the Christ, could not accept the word that He would suffer and die. Jesus resolutely drove out the thinking that wants glory without the cross.

The Lord builds His church on the faith that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God. That church must testify to Jesus' death and resurrection, opening the door of heaven to people, and must discern the wrong teachings that corrupt the gospel.

The person who follows Jesus must not make his own thoughts and desires an absolute standard but must deny himself before the Lord's will. For gaining life in the Lord is more precious than gaining the whole world.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 16 is the chapter that teaches that the church is built on the faith that confesses Jesus as the Christ who accomplishes salvation through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection and as the Son of the living God, and that His disciple must deny his own thoughts and follow the Lord's way.

2) Matthew Chapter 16 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapter 16 teaches the faith that rightly confesses who Jesus is, the church built on that confession, Jesus' cross

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and resurrection, and the way of the disciple who denies his own thoughts and follows the Lord.

When we read this chapter on the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is something we must distinguish first. Matthew chapter 16 does not directly explain Jesus' baptism again. But the event of the cross and the resurrection, of which Jesus said that He must suffer, be killed, and rise again on the third day, is connected as one with the event in Matthew chapter 3, in which Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel that Jesus, the Son of God, came in the flesh of man, received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and was judged on the cross by shedding His blood, and rose again from the dead, completing the salvation of sinners. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of the living God and that this work of salvation is the righteousness of God.

1. The sign of Jonah points to Jesus' death and resurrection (verses 1–4)

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign from heaven not to believe in Jesus but to test Him. They had already seen Jesus healing the sick, casting out demons, and performing the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and two fish. Yet without believing in their hearts, they demanded yet another sign of their own choosing.

Jesus rebuked them because they could discern the weather but could not discern the age in which God was saving sinners. The Son of God had come into the world in the flesh and was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, but they were bound by their own thoughts and religious authority and failed

to recognize Jesus.

The sign of Jonah that Jesus spoke of points to the Lord's death and resurrection. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish and came out, Jesus would be killed and rise again. The sign of Jonah points directly to Jesus' death and resurrection. But the salvation this sign testifies to cannot be explained by the cross and the resurrection separated on their own. Jesus first took upon Himself all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and died on the cross, and rose again in three days. The surest sign of salvation God has given sinners is this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In the flow of salvation in the whole Gospel of Matthew, however, Jesus' death cannot be separated from the baptism He received from John. Jesus was not crucified meaninglessly, without any sin. Because He took upon Himself the sins of mankind when He received baptism from John at the Jordan River, He bore those sins and was judged on the cross.

Jesus' resurrection is the evidence that the Lord received the punishment of sin completely and overcame the power of death. Therefore, the greatest sign God has given sinners is not a miracle that changes our immediate circumstances, but the event in which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through His baptism, died on the cross, and rose again to save sinners.

2. The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees is teaching that blurs the gospel (verses 5–12)

When Jesus told the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought He said it because they had not brought bread. Jesus reminded them of the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and two fish, and told them to guard against the doctrine of those men, not the bread of the flesh.

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The Pharisees regarded man's religious works and traditions more highly than the grace of God. They thought they could become righteous by keeping outward regulations and the Law. The Sadducees denied the resurrection and the spiritual world and reduced the word of God to human reason and worldly standards.

Though their forms differed, both teachings kept people from believing in Jesus rightly. The one set man's works above the righteousness of God, and the other did not believe in God's supernatural salvation and the power of the resurrection.

On the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the leaven can be applied to any teaching that mixes human merit or wrong doctrine into the perfect salvation of Jesus. If someone speaks only of the blood of the cross while leaving out the fact that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John, or teaches that although Jesus removed all sins, man must complete that salvation by repeated acts of repentance, the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man become mixed.

The true gospel delivers Jesus' baptism, cross, and resurrection as one. Jesus took over sin through His baptism, received the judgment of that sin on the cross, and gave us new life through His resurrection. To this, human merit or religious zeal cannot be added as a condition for the remission of sin.

Leaven looks small at first, but it spreads through the whole lump of dough. Adding or subtracting a small part of the gospel may look trivial, but if it blurs how sin was passed on to Jesus and how those sins were judged, sin ends up remaining in people's hearts. That is why the Lord told us to beware of wrong teaching.

3. If we are gripped by the worries of the flesh, we cannot understand the Lord's word

Even while Jesus was warning against the teaching that corrupts the gospel, the disciples thought only about the problem of not having brought bread. The Lord had already fed five thousand with five loaves and four thousand with seven loaves. Yet the disciples worried again because they had no bread.

Even a person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can miss the spiritual danger the Lord is speaking of if he is caught up only in the problems of daily living before his eyes. This does not mean that the matter of making a living is unimportant. Jesus actually fed the hungry multitude. But when the worries of the flesh occupy the whole heart, we come to neglect the work of discerning and keeping the gospel.

Jesus made the disciples remember the grace He had bestowed in the past. Faith is remembering what God has already done and entrusting today's problems to the Lord as well. It is the same with the problem of the remission of sin. If we look only at our own shortcomings and feelings, it can feel as if sin has come back to life, but if we remember the word that Jesus solved all sins through His baptism and the cross, we can stand by faith.

4. The question *"Who do you say that I am?"* is the center of faith (verses 13–16)

People thought Jesus was John the Baptist or Elijah, or Jeremiah or one of the prophets. They respected Jesus as a great prophet, but they did not know Him as the Son of God and the Christ, the Savior.

Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Knowing other people's thoughts and believing in Jesus oneself are different. The fact that my family or my church believes in

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Jesus cannot take the place of my own confession of faith.

Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Christ"* means the King, the Priest, and the Prophet anointed by God.

Jesus, as the King of kings, rules over the power of sin and death. As the true High Priest, He gave His own body as a sacrifice, and He received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, and took all sins upon Himself. And as the true Prophet, He makes known to us the will of God and the way of salvation.

On the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the confession *"You are the Christ"* is not merely acknowledging Jesus as someone who helps in times of difficulty. It is believing that Jesus is the Savior who took all my sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, the Redeemer who received the punishment of those sins in my place on the cross, and the Son of God who rose again and gave me eternal life.

If Jesus were only a man, He could not take upon Himself the sins of all the people of the world. Conversely, if He had not taken on the body of a man, He could not have borne our sins in His body and died shedding His blood. Jesus is the Savior who came as true God and true man.

5. Knowing Jesus rightly is the grace of God (verse 17)

Jesus said that Peter had come to know this fact not by flesh and blood but because His Father in heaven had made it known to him.

It is possible to understand the gospel of the water and the Spirit as mere religious knowledge. One can even memorize the facts that Jesus received baptism, was crucified, and rose again. But accepting in the heart the fact that this event is the righteousness of God that solved all my sins comes about

through the word of God and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not someone who separately creates a new method of salvation. He testifies to the truth of the salvation Jesus accomplished and opens people's hearts to believe that word. The Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and that He accomplished perfect salvation through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

Therefore, a person who has come to know Jesus rightly cannot boast of his own wisdom. He acknowledges that he believed the gospel not because he was smarter or more righteous than others, but by the grace of God, who let him hear the Word and understand it.

6. The church is built on the confession that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit (verse 18)

Jesus said, *"On this rock I will build My church."* The rock Jesus spoke of is not Peter's human authority as an individual, but Peter's firm faith that believes in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of the living God, and the truth of that confession. God builds the church on this faith, and even the power of Hades cannot overcome this faith in the gospel.

But the owner of the church is not Peter; it is Jesus. The Lord said, *"On this rock I will build My church."* It is not Peter's individual human ability or authority that becomes the rock of the church; the church is built on the Christ he confessed and on the faith God revealed.

On the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the church does not simply mean a chapel building or a religious organization. It is the assembly of people who have received the remission of sins by believing the fact that Jesus took their sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John and solved all sins

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through the cross and the resurrection.

The church is not a place that boasts of man's righteousness but a place that testifies to the righteousness of Jesus. It must not remain a place that endlessly demands that people wash away their own sins, but must deliver accurately how Jesus washed away all sins.

Jesus said that the power of Hades would not prevail against the church. This does not mean that the church suffers no hardship or persecution in the world. It means that because Jesus overcame death and rose again, the power of death and hell cannot finally destroy the church built on the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

7. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are the gospel that looses people from sin (verses 19–20)

Jesus told Peter that He would give him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. This does not mean that Peter could send people to heaven or to hell at will. Nor does it mean that God unconditionally follows the personal judgment of some religious leader.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven entrusted to Peter are connected with the mission of testifying rightly to who Jesus is and preaching the gospel. Later, Peter testified to Jesus' death and resurrection and proclaimed to people that they should repent and believe in the Lord.

On the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are the word of the gospel that Jesus saved sinners through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes this gospel in his heart is loosed from sin and enters the kingdom of God. Conversely, the person who rejects the salvation God has accomplished and keeps his sins as they are remains bound in sin.

That the church looses people from sin does not mean that a church leader removes sins by his own ability. It means that the church delivers accurately the gospel that Jesus has already removed sins, and leads people to believe that word. The only One who actually bore the sins and was judged is Jesus.

Therefore, for the church to use the keys of the kingdom of heaven is not to bind people to a church organization or its leaders. It is to loose people from the bondage of trying to wash away their sins by their own works, and to lead them to believe in the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

8. Jesus' baptism, cross, and resurrection are one work of salvation (verse 21)

After Peter's confession, Jesus began for the first time to teach plainly that He must go up to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and rise again on the third day.

To know why Jesus had to die, we must know the baptism He received at the Jordan River. Even before He received baptism, Jesus was the Son of God without sin. But through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Lord took all the sins of the world upon His own body.

Just as in the Old Testament a flawless sacrificial offering received a sinner's sins passed on to it through the laying on of hands and then shed its blood and died, Jesus received baptism from John, took the sins of mankind upon Himself, and then died on the cross. If Jesus' baptism was the taking on of sin, the cross was the judgment of that sin.

Therefore, if we separate Jesus' baptism from His cross, it is hard to understand the flow of salvation completely. If we speak only of the cross without His baptism, it is not clear what sins Jesus bore and was judged for. Conversely, if we speak only of the fact that He took sins upon Himself through His baptism and

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leave out the blood of the cross, we cannot explain how the punishment of sin was resolved.

The resurrection is also indispensable. Jesus received the punishment of our sins and rose again from death. The resurrection testifies that the power of sin and death has been defeated and that those who believe have received new life in the Lord.

This is the work of God. That Jesus took on sins through His baptism, paid the wages of those sins on the cross, and brought us to life through His resurrection is God's plan of salvation.

9. The thinking that tries to stop the cross hinders the work of God (verses 22–23)

Peter said to Jesus, *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* He may have loved Jesus and wanted to protect Him. But his words were words that blocked Jesus from receiving the judgment of sin on the cross.

Jesus rebuked Peter sternly, saying, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* It does not mean that Peter himself was Satan, but that at that moment his thinking was in the same direction as Satan's temptation to make Jesus turn away from the way of the cross.

Peter rightly confessed Jesus as the Christ, but he could not accept the Christ who suffers and dies. He wanted a glorious King, but he did not want a Savior who bears the cross.

Today as well, we can say that we love Jesus and yet fail to accept the Lord's baptism and cross fully. We can regard human religious feelings and familiar doctrines as more important than the way the Lord walked to save sinners.

The work of God is not a method of salvation made by man. It is the event in which Jesus received baptism from John, died on the cross, and rose again. However good the intention behind a thought may be, if it covers or blocks this way of salvation, it

is contrary to God's will.

10. Denying oneself is laying down one's own righteousness and one's own judgment (verse 24)

Jesus said that whoever wants to come after Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him.

Denying oneself does not mean hating one's own personality or abusing oneself. It is laying down the attitude that makes one's own thoughts and desires the final standard of truth, and acknowledging that Jesus' word is right.

Peter had to deny his own thought that Jesus must not die. To his own judgment the cross looked like failure, but the word of God said that it was the way salvation would be accomplished. A disciple must exalt the Lord's word above his own thoughts.

Self-denial is also needed to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must lay down the self-righteousness that says, "I have lived this uprightly," "I have led a life of faith for a long time," or "I have repented every day, so I will receive the remission of my sins." And we must accept the word of God that Jesus completely solved my sins through His baptism and the cross.

The believer's own cross is not a cross that pays the wages of his sins in his place. Jesus has already received all the punishment of sin. The cross a disciple bears is to regard the Lord's will and the gospel as more precious than his own greed and gain, and to bear the sacrifices and hardships he meets in believing, preaching, and serving the gospel.

Jesus' cross is the cross that accomplishes salvation, and the disciple's cross is the cross of obedience on which a saved person follows the Lord. These two must not be confused.

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11. The remission of sin and eternal life are more precious than the whole world (verses 25–27)

Jesus said that whoever desires to save his own life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for the Lord will find it. It profits a man nothing if he gains the whole world and loses his own life.

A person can spend his whole life to gain money, honor, and success. But if he possesses everything in the world and yet fails to solve the sin of his heart and loses eternal life, in the end he has gained nothing.

Here lies the reason the gospel of the water and the Spirit is precious. This gospel gives the remission of sin and eternal life, which are more precious than the temporary success of the world. The fact that Jesus took all my sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, ended the punishment of sin on the cross, and gave eternal life through His resurrection is a treasure of salvation that cannot be exchanged even for the whole world.

At the last, Jesus comes in the glory of His Father with His angels and rewards each person according to what he has done. This does not mean that a person buys salvation with his good deeds. A person's deeds reveal what he believed and whom he served as his master.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a person who acts perfectly but a person who has received the remission of sins by the righteousness of Jesus. That faith appears in his life as the fruit of following the Lord and serving the gospel. God remembers and rewards not the merits a person piles up to be saved, but what he has done in following the Lord by faith.

12. The word that some would see the Son of Man coming with His royal authority (verse 28)

Jesus said that there were some standing there who would see the Son of Man coming with His royal authority before they died.

In the nearest context, this can be understood as referring to the event on the Mount of Transfiguration in the next chapter. On the mountain, Peter, James, and John saw Jesus' face shining like the sun and His clothes becoming as white as the light, and they experienced the Lord's royal authority and glory in advance.

More broadly, it can also be understood as a word looking ahead to the manifestation of the power of the kingdom of God through Jesus' resurrection and the preaching of the gospel. Jesus, who would die on the cross, was not a failure but the Son of God, who would rise again and reveal His royal authority.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not look only at present sufferings. He believes that Jesus, who solved our sins through His baptism and the cross and rose again, will come again as the glorious King. The reason that living now in self-denial for the gospel is not in vain is also that the Lord will surely come again.

The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 16 conveys

Whom we believe Jesus to be is the center of faith. Jesus is not one of the great prophets; He is the Christ and the Son of the living God.

The confession that Jesus is the Christ must also include faith in how He saved us. Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received all the punishment of those sins on the cross, and rose again from the dead, completing salvation.

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On this faith the church is built. The church is not a place that exalts man's righteousness and religious tradition, but a place that preaches the gospel that Jesus solved all sins through the water and the Spirit. This gospel becomes the key of the kingdom of heaven, loosing those who believe from sin and leading them into the kingdom of God.

The person who follows Jesus must deny his own thoughts and his own righteousness. Bearing one's own cross does not mean paying the wages of one's own sins; it means laying down one's own desires and gain to believe and serve the gospel the Lord has accomplished. Jesus has already borne the punishment of sin completely.

In the end, what matters most is not gaining the whole world but receiving the remission of sin and eternal life that Jesus gives. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit confesses Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, discerns the wrong leaven, lays down his own thoughts, and follows the way of the gospel, looking to the Lord who will come again.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 16 is the chapter that teaches that Jesus is the Christ, who took the sin of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection, and the Son of the living God; that the church is built on the confession that believes this gospel, and sinners enter the kingdom of heaven through it; and that those who are saved must deny their own righteousness and their own desires and follow the Lord. ✉

Matthew Chapter 16

The church is built on the confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ

Introduction

Matthew chapter 16 begins with the scene in which the Pharisees and Sadducees test Jesus and demand that He show them a sign from heaven. They could discern the signs of the weather, yet they could not discern the sign of the times right before their eyes, that is, the work of salvation the Christ had come and was carrying out. Jesus said that a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but that there was nothing to show it except the sign of Jonah. The sign of Jonah is the surest sign of salvation God gives, pointing to Jesus' death and His resurrection in three days.

Jesus warned His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. At first the disciples misunderstood it as a word of concern about their not having brought bread, but the leaven Jesus spoke of was their doctrine. Teaching that puts forward human tradition and self-righteousness, and teaching that denies the resurrection and the power of God, spread like leaven and blur the truth of the gospel. Today as well, any teaching that mixes human merit into salvation is the same leaven.

In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?"* People regarded Jesus as John the

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Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, but Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Jesus said that this confession had come not from human thinking but from His Father in heaven, who had made it known, and He promised that He would build His church on this rock and that the power of Hades would not prevail against it. The church is built not on a building or an organization but on the true confession that believes in Jesus as the Christ.

From that time Jesus began to teach His disciples for the first time that He must go up to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, be killed, and rise again on the third day. When Peter tried to stop this, saying, *"Far be it from You,"* Jesus rebuked him sternly, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* For blocking the cross, however much it may look like something that comes from a good heart, is a work that hinders God's plan of salvation. Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection were the will of God that had to be fulfilled.

Then Jesus said that whoever desires to come after Him must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Him. Denying oneself is laying down one's own righteousness and one's own judgment and accepting as it is the salvation God has accomplished. What profit is it if a man gains the whole world and loses his own life? Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received all the judgment by bearing those sins and dying on the cross shedding His blood, and overcame the power of sin and death by rising from death. The remission of sin and eternal life received by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit are more precious than the whole world.

In Matthew chapter 16, whom we believe Jesus to be is the center of faith, and the church is built on the true confession that believes in the Christ. Now, as we examine the words of the

main text one by one, let us find out about the salvation the sign of Jonah points to, the faith contained in Peter's confession, and the way of the disciple who denies himself and follows the Lord.

The true sign of the times is not a miracle before our eyes but the salvation Jesus completed through His baptism, death, and resurrection

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' And He left them and departed." (Matthew 16:1–4)

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were groups that differed from each other in religious disposition and doctrine. The Pharisees regarded the Law and the tradition of the elders as important, and the Sadducees did not acknowledge the resurrection or the spiritual world. But they became one in not believing in Jesus and standing against Him. Human religions, though they take different forms, can be the same in that they do not accept the salvation God has accomplished.

They asked for a sign not honestly, in order to believe in Jesus, but *"testing Him."* Jesus had already healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, and fed great crowds with little food. Yet they said they would believe only if He showed them a sign from heaven in the way they demanded.

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To a person who has made up his mind not to believe, no number of signs is ever enough. When he sees one miracle he demands a greater one, and when he sees that, he demands yet another proof. The problem lies not in a lack of evidence but in the heart that refuses to accept the word of God. True faith is not testing God to satisfy one's own standards but accepting the word God has given.

The Pharisees regarded their own works of the Law and their devout appearance as their righteousness and did not believe in Jesus. The Sadducees regarded visible reality and religious power as important and did not acknowledge the resurrection. One side was captive to human works and the other to the reality of the world, but neither saw that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior.

Jesus rebuked them because they could predict the weather by looking at the evening and morning sky, yet they could not discern *"the signs of the times."* People can be sensitive to changes in the economy, politics, weather, and society, and yet indifferent to what God is accomplishing now. They diligently discern what benefits the life of the flesh, but they do not realize the sin of their own souls and the time of salvation.

The most important sign of the times in those days was the fact that the promised Messiah had come among them. As the prophets of the Old Testament had foretold, the Son of God had come in the flesh of man and was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven and healing the sick. John the Baptist also testified that Jesus was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Yet even after seeing all this, they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah.

Discerning the times today, likewise, does not mean only forcibly connecting world events with the prophecies of the Bible and calculating dates. What we must discern first is the

fact that now is the time of grace, when we must believe in the salvation Jesus completed. However the world may change, man dies and is judged because of sin, and the only One who can save us from that judgment is Jesus Christ.

Jesus called the generation that only demanded signs *"a wicked and adulterous generation."* Being adulterous here includes not only fleshly lewdness but also the spiritual unfaithfulness of leaving God and relying on other things. If with our lips we say we believe in God while in reality we rely more on our own works, on the power of the world, and on visible miracles, our hearts have departed from God.

Jesus said to them, *"No sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."* The event in which Jonah entered the belly of the great fish, spent three days there, and came out again points in advance to Jesus' death and resurrection. It means that Jesus' dying on the cross, being buried in the tomb, and rising again in three days would be the most decisive sign.

But the sign of Jonah must not be understood with the cross and the resurrection detached on their own. Before Jesus died on the cross, He first had to take the sins of mankind upon Himself. Jesus received all the sins of the people of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the cross, receiving the judgment of sin, and He completed salvation by rising again in three days.

The baptism Jesus received from John is connected with the laying on of hands in the Old Testament. Just as in the Old Testament the sacrificial offering received sins passed on to it through the laying on of hands and was then put to death, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself through His baptism and was then judged on the cross. Therefore, Jesus' death was not the death of one righteous man unrelated to sin, but the atoning

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death received by the Lamb of God, who bore the sin of the world.

Jesus' resurrection is the evidence that He is truly the Son of God and that He overcame sin and death. If Jesus had not risen from death, our faith would be vain. But since Jesus rose again in three days just as He had said, everyone who believes in His baptism and cross is saved from all sins and receives eternal life. This is the greatest and surest sign God has given mankind.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not make miraculous experiences the ground of his salvation. Experiences such as being healed, seeing a vision, or hearing a special voice can differ from person to person, and such experiences in themselves do not guarantee the remission of sin. The ground of salvation is the objective fact that Jesus received baptism, died on the cross, and rose again according to the word of Scripture.

The most amazing miracle is that a person who was to perish because of sin believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and becomes a righteous person without sin. That a person who had sin in his heart believes in the saving work of Jesus, is washed of all his sins, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift is the true spiritual sign. And that a person who used to live only for himself comes to preach the gospel and serve other souls is also the fruit borne by the grace of salvation.

The word that Jesus finally left them is a solemn warning. If a person keeps testing and refusing to the end even though God continues to give him the Word and evidence, he loses the opportunity of grace. To those who demanded only signs without believing in Jesus, the Lord did not provide an interesting spectacle. We must believe the word of salvation that has already been fully given.

Therefore, we must not test God, saying, "If You show me a

miracle, I will believe." We must believe the word that the Son of God came to this earth, took all our sins upon Himself through His baptism, was judged on the cross, and rose again in three days. Realizing and believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the faith that rightly discerns the signs of the times, and it is the only way to be saved from sin and judgment.

The word to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees is a warning to forsake the teachings of men and hold fast to the gospel of perfect salvation

"Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matthew 16:5–12)

As the disciples crossed to the other side in the boat, they forgot to bring bread. At that very moment Jesus said, *"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."* But the disciples failed to receive this word as a

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spiritual warning and thought He was rebuking them for not having brought bread. It was because their hearts were held not by Jesus' word but by the needs of the flesh right before their eyes.

The leaven Jesus spoke of was not the leaven put into actual bread. Verse 12 makes it clear that it was *"the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."* Even a very small amount of leaven, once it enters the dough, gradually makes the whole lump rise. In the same way, wrong teaching may look small and trivial at first, but once it is received into the heart, it corrupts the whole of a person's faith and thinking.

The Pharisees regarded the traditions of their ancestors and religious forms as more important than the word of God. They put forward outward piety and the works of the Law and thought themselves more righteous than others. But however uprightly a person lives and however many religious works he performs, he cannot wash away the sin of his heart by his own deeds. Teaching that puts forward man's righteousness as a condition of salvation is the leaven of the Pharisees, which covers the righteousness of God and drives people into self-righteousness.

The Sadducees did not acknowledge the resurrection or the spiritual world. They set human reason and practical judgment above the word of God. Today as well, if people do not believe in God's salvation, judgment, and resurrection, and teach Christianity merely as a way to succeed and live comfortably in this world, that teaching is like the leaven of the Sadducees. The Pharisees tried to replace the righteousness of God with religious works, and the Sadducees tried to confine the word of God within human thinking.

The two teachings look different, but they have something in common. They do not believe in the perfect salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, and they put human works and thoughts

first. The Pharisees and Sadducees had seen countless miracles and still did not believe in Jesus as the Savior. Because they would not lay down their religious authority and their own thoughts, they failed to recognize the Messiah God had sent, even with Him right before their eyes.

Jesus reminded the disciples, who were worrying because of bread, of the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and two fish. He had fed five thousand with five loaves and left twelve baskets, and fed four thousand with seven loaves and left seven large baskets. What Jesus emphasized was not that they should attach some mysterious meaning to the numbers of baskets left over. It was that they should remember the fact that even when there was no bread, the Lord fed them abundantly and had food left over.

Therefore, the reason Jesus rebuked the disciples as *"you of little faith"* was not that they had failed to prepare bread. It was that they did not remember the Lord's power and grace they had already experienced and looked again only at the lack of the flesh. When faith grows small, a person forgets the grace God bestowed before and sees only what he now lacks. Then he misunderstands even the word that saves the soul as a word about the problems of the flesh.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, what we must remember most clearly is the work of the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished. Jesus took all the sins of the whole of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He was nailed to the cross and died shedding His blood, receiving all the judgment of sin, and He rose again in three days, saving us completely from sin and death. This is the gospel of salvation God has given sinners.

The leaven of the Pharisees teaches that a person finally

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becomes righteous by keeping the Law well and washing away his own sins every day. But sin does not disappear through man's good deeds or religious zeal. We receive the remission of sins when we believe the fact that Jesus took over all our sins through the baptism He received from John and bore all the punishment of those sins on the cross. Salvation is not something man completes by his own works; it is the gift of God, received by believing in the righteousness Jesus has already completed.

This does not mean, however, that the gospel of the water and the Spirit disregards a holy life. Living uprightly in order to receive the remission of sins and living according to God's will in gratitude after receiving the remission of sins are entirely different. Good deeds are not a condition or price of salvation but the fruit that comes from saved faith. If we reverse this order and make human works the ground of salvation, we fall into the leaven of the Pharisees again.

Also, teaching that speaks only of the cross while leaving out how Jesus took on the sin of the world, or that regards Jesus' baptism as merely an exemplary ceremony, likewise blurs the complete gospel. Jesus' baptism, cross, and resurrection are not separate events. Jesus took on sins through His baptism, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and completed salvation through His resurrection. The Holy Spirit testifies to the remission of sin in the heart of the person who believes this truth and leads him to live as a child of God.

To beware of leaven does not simply mean criticizing other people's doctrines. It means first examining before the word of God what we ourselves believe. However old a tradition may be, and however famous the person who spoke, if it differs from the gospel of Scripture, we must not accept it as it is. The rightness or wrongness of a teaching must be discerned not by a person's authority or the size of a denomination, but by whether it fully

testifies, according to Scripture, to the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished.

The disciples at first misunderstood Jesus' word as a matter of fleshly bread, but after hearing the Lord's explanation they finally understood its meaning. We too can misunderstand the Word at first. What matters is not clinging to our own thoughts but returning to the Lord's word and coming to understand its meaning rightly.

Therefore, this word is a command not to let our hearts be taken captive only by the lack of the flesh, but to guard against false teachings that corrupt the soul. The Lord is the One who can supply what our flesh needs, and He has already solved the much greater problem, all our sins. We must throw away the leaven of human works and thoughts and firmly believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, completed through Jesus' baptism, His death on the cross, and His resurrection. When we keep that gospel clearly in our hearts, we can discern wrong teachings and live with unshakable faith.

Peter's confession of faith is the rock of the church, which believes that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ who saves sinners

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in

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heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ." (Matthew 16:13–20)

Jesus first asked His disciples, *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"* People in those days thought of Jesus as a great prophet like John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah. Seeing Jesus' words and power, they acknowledged that He was no ordinary man, but they did not know exactly who He was.

Acknowledging Jesus as a great teacher or as one of the prophets cannot be the faith that leads to salvation. Jesus is not one of the many servants God sent; He is the only begotten Son, God Himself come in the flesh, and the only Savior, who removes the sin of the world. Respecting Jesus and believing in Him as the Christ are entirely different.

After hearing the world's assessment, Jesus asked, *"Who do you say that I am?"* What matters here is not how other people think of Jesus but whom I know and believe Jesus to be. Faith is not completed by confessing along with the faith of one's family, denomination, or neighbors. Each person must believe before the word of God that Jesus is his own Savior.

Peter answered, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Christ"* means 'the Anointed One.' In the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets carried out their offices after being anointed by God. Jesus is the Christ, who fulfilled these three offices completely.

Jesus, as King, overcame the power of sin and death and rules over His people. As High Priest, He took upon Himself all the sins of sinners and gave His own body as the eternal sacrifice

of atonement. And as Prophet, He clearly taught us the will of God and the truth of salvation. Therefore, the confession *"You are the Christ"* means believing in Jesus as my King, my High Priest, and the true Prophet who teaches the truth of salvation.

Peter also confessed Jesus as *"the Son of the living God."* Jesus is not merely a man who received God's special love; He is God the Son, who has the nature of God. Though He came to this earth in the body of a man, He is the Creator, who has existed from the beginning. Because Jesus, who is God, became a man, He could take the sins of all mankind upon Himself and give us eternal life.

Jesus said to Peter, *"Blessed are you."* Peter was blessed not because he had much knowledge or a finer character than the other disciples. Jesus said, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."* The faith that knows Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God is not produced by human wisdom or effort alone; it is the grace God grants by making it known through the Word.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the confession that Jesus is the Christ contains the work of salvation He accomplished for sinners. Jesus took all the sins of the whole of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing the sin of the world, He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, receiving all the punishment of sin, and He rose again in three days, giving the remission of sins and eternal life to those who believe.

Therefore, a true confession of faith does not end with merely saying with the lips, "Jesus is the Son of God." We must believe how the Son of God took my sins upon Himself, how He was judged, and how He saved me. Believing together in who Jesus is and in the salvation He accomplished is the complete

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faith Peter's confession points toward.

At this time, however, Peter had not yet understood completely all the meaning of the cross and the resurrection. In the passage that follows, Peter is rebuked for trying to dissuade Jesus from His suffering and death. Yet through the revelation God had given him, he clearly confessed that Jesus was the Christ and the Son of God. This faith, after he witnessed Jesus' death and resurrection and received the Holy Spirit, appeared later as a clearer and more complete testimony of the gospel.

Jesus said, *"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church."* From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this rock does not mean the ability or character of Peter as a human being. The rock is the faith Peter confessed, the firm faith that believes in Jesus as the Christ—the King of kings, the High Priest of heaven, and the true Prophet—and as the Son of the living God. On this faith Jesus built His church. By confessing this truth, Peter became a man who stood on that rock.

The church is not built on the authority or tradition of any one human being. As Jesus said *"My church,"* the owner of the church is Jesus Christ. The true church is the community of those who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, who took the sin of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the punishment of that sin on the cross, and rose again from death. The foundation of the church is not a building or the size of an organization but the word of salvation God has accomplished.

Jesus promised concerning that church, *"The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it."* The power of Hades signifies the power of sin, death, and Satan. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes the fact that Jesus bore all sins and received their judgment, and therefore he is no longer under the condemnation of sin. Moreover, because he has

become one united with the risen Jesus, though his flesh dies, he does not lose eternal life.

This word does not mean that the church suffers no hardship or persecution in the world. The church can suffer, and its visible organization can even decline. But the true faith built on the salvation of Jesus Christ, and God's people who have that faith, are not destroyed by the power of sin and death. For Jesus overcame death and rose again.

Jesus said that He would give Peter *"the keys of the kingdom of heaven."* These keys are not a personal power by which Peter could bring people into heaven or drive them out at his own will. The key that opens the kingdom of heaven means the faith that knows, believes, and preaches the gospel of the remission of sin that Jesus Christ accomplished, and the authority of that word.

When the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached, the person who believes that word is loosed from all sins and enters the kingdom of God. But the person who does not accept this gospel remains bound in his own sins. Therefore, the word that 'whatever is bound on earth is bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven' does not mean that God unconditionally follows human judgment. It means that when the church preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the key of the kingdom of heaven, the person who believes that gospel has his sins loosed on earth and in heaven, and the person who does not believe remains bound in his sins.

The person who has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven must not boast of his own authority but must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to sinners. Jesus took all the sins of the people of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and died on the cross shedding His blood, and rose again in three days, completing salvation. The person who hears this word and

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believes it in his heart receives the remission of all his sins, belongs to the Church of God, and enters the kingdom of heaven.

When Jesus told His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ, it did not mean that this truth was to be hidden forever. People in those days misunderstood the Christ as a political king who would liberate them from the rule of Rome. Moreover, the time when Jesus would complete salvation through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection had not yet come. After the work of salvation was completed, He rather commanded His disciples to preach the gospel to all the world.

In the end this word puts the question to us, *"Who do you say that I am?"* We must not know Jesus only as someone who grants our wishes or as an excellent teacher. Jesus is the living God, the Christ who took all our sins upon Himself and received the judgment of those sins in our place. The faith that believes this fact is the rock of the church and the key that opens the kingdom of heaven. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can confess sincerely with Peter, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

The thinking that blocks Jesus' cross is the things of men, but denying oneself and following the Lord is the faith that is mindful of the things of God

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God,

but the things of men.' Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.'" (Matthew 16:21–28)

Right after Peter confessed Jesus as *"the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* Jesus began to teach that He would suffer in Jerusalem, be killed, and rise again on the third day. If Peter's confession was a confession about who Jesus is, this word was about the suffering, death, and resurrection the Christ would accomplish to save sinners.

Verse 21 says that Jesus must suffer, be killed, and rise again. The cross and the resurrection were not an accidental event or a tragedy brought about by men's schemes; they were God's plan for the salvation of mankind, established from before the foundation of the world.

Jesus was not a victim killed because He lacked power. Knowing in advance all that would happen to Him, He went up to Jerusalem to fulfill the will of God. Jesus was the Lamb of God, who willingly gave His own body to save sinners.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus' baptism, cross, and resurrection are connected as one. Jesus took all the sins of the whole of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the punishment of sin, and

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He overcame the power of sin and death by rising again on the third day.

If Jesus had not taken on the sin of the world, there would have been no reason for Him to die on the cross. Conversely, if He had taken on sins through His baptism but had not received the judgment of the cross, the wages of sin would not have been paid. And if Jesus had not risen again, the fact that He completely overcame sin and death would not have been proved. Therefore, Jesus' baptism, death, and resurrection are one gospel that completed the righteousness of God, which saves sinners.

But when Peter heard Jesus' word, he said, *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* Peter loved Jesus and did not want his Teacher to suffer. By human affection, his words look loyal and warm. But because he tried to block the cross without knowing God's plan of salvation, his words ended up hindering the work of God.

Peter accepted the Christ as a glorious King, but he did not yet understand the Christ who suffers and dies. He expected Jesus to overcome the powers of the world and restore Israel, but he did not know that the royal authority that saves sinners must first appear through sacrifice and the cross. The salvation man wants and the salvation God accomplishes can differ from each other.

Jesus rebuked Peter sternly, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* This does not mean that Peter himself had turned into Satan. It was because in Peter's words Satan's thinking was at work, trying to keep Jesus from going the way of the cross. Satan feared most of all the work of salvation in which Jesus would take the sin of the world upon Himself and receive the judgment of sin on the cross.

Even Peter, who a moment earlier had made a right confession by the revelation of God, could immediately speak

the thoughts of man. Even a saved person does not always automatically think only God's will. Even in a person who has received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the thoughts of the flesh and self-centered desires remain. Therefore a believer must always discern his own thoughts before the word of God.

Jesus said to Peter, *"You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."* The things of God are that Jesus goes the way of His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection to save sinners. The things of men, on the other hand, are to put the comfort of the flesh and the glory of the world before the will of God, and to seek only faith without suffering and glory without sacrifice.

Then Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* Denying oneself does not mean hating oneself or removing one's personality and individuality. It is not making one's own judgment and desires the absolute standard, but acknowledging Jesus as the Master of one's life.

A sinner's first self-denial begins with acknowledging that he cannot become righteous by his own strength and good deeds. However many prayers of repentance a person offers and however hard he tries to keep the Law, he cannot remove his sins by himself. Acknowledging that he has no ability to save himself, and believing the gospel that Jesus took all his sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the cross, is the fundamental self-denial.

Self-denial after being saved is a life that follows the word of God without putting forward one's own merit or wisdom. When our thoughts collide with the Word, we acknowledge that the Word is right, and we choose the benefit of the gospel over the benefit of the flesh. Like Peter, even a thought that comes

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from a good intention must be laid down if it blocks God's salvation.

A disciple's own cross, *"his cross,"* must be distinguished from Jesus' atoning cross. Only the cross Jesus bore can atone for the sins of mankind. The cross a believer bears is not suffering to pay the price of his own sins or to obtain salvation. It means the sacrifices and hardships that a person who has already been saved comes to bear in following Jesus' word and serving the gospel.

Not every inconvenience or illness of daily life can be called one's own cross without qualification. Pain caused by one's own fault, or hardship endured to achieve one's greed, is not itself the Lord's cross. The disciple's cross is laying down one's own desires because of following Jesus' will, and bearing loss, misunderstanding, and persecution because of keeping the gospel.

The word of Jesus, *"Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it,"* does not mean treating life carelessly or recklessly choosing death. Nor does this word mean that a person obtains the remission of sin by sacrificing himself or being martyred. The remission of sin and eternal life are received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Here, the life that tries to save its own life is a saved person using his lifetime only for the benefit of his own flesh, and the life that loses its life for the Lord is using the life he has received for the gospel and the salvation of souls. If we live only for ourselves, we lose the true purpose of life; if we live for the gospel, we find the true value of the life God has given.

The word *"What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* is a declaration that the value of the soul is more precious than all the possessions of the world.

People sacrifice many things to gain money, honor, and power, but if a person possesses the whole world and yet does not receive the remission of sin and loses eternal life, it is of no use. Nothing in the world can take the place of one person's soul.

The word that the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels points to Jesus' coming again as the Lord of judgment. He first came in a low and humble form to save sinners, but when He comes again, He will appear as the King of kings. At that time Jesus will reward each person according to what he has done.

This word does not mean that a person buys salvation with good deeds. Salvation is received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. But a person's deeds show what he actually believed and whom he served as his master. The person who rejected the gospel receives the judgment of his own sins, and the person who believed the gospel receives praise and reward according to the life in which he served the Lord within the grace of salvation.

In verse 28 Jesus said that some of the disciples would see the Son of Man coming with His royal authority before they died. This word first appears in the event of the Mount of Transfiguration recorded in the very next chapter. Peter, James, and John, seeing Jesus' face shine like the sun and His clothes become as white as the light, saw in advance the glory of the Christ, who would appear with royal authority. Moreover, Jesus' resurrection and ascension, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the spread of the gospel showed still more clearly that His royal authority was actually at work.

In the end, this word teaches us not to seek glory without the cross. Jesus gave Himself to save us and completed the work of God through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. The person who has received the remission of sin through this gospel

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no longer makes himself the master of his life but must follow Jesus. The life that denies one's own thoughts and bears one's own cross for the gospel is not the price of salvation; it is the life of a disciple who lives in gratitude for the salvation and love received from the Lord. ✉

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 16

[Question] 1. What is the central teaching that Matthew chapter 16 gives?

The core lesson of Matthew chapter 16 is that we must rightly believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, forsake human thoughts and false teachings, deny ourselves, take up our own cross, and follow Jesus.

1. We must forsake the unbelief that seeks only signs (verses 1–4)

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign from heaven to test Jesus. Jesus rebuked them as a wicked and adulterous generation and said that no sign would be shown them except the sign of Jonah. This means that Jesus' death and resurrection are the decisive sign showing that He is the Christ.

2. We must beware of false religious teaching (verses 5–12)

Jesus told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The leaven here means their wrong teaching. False teaching can influence a person's faith and a whole community, just as a little leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough, so we must guard against it.

3. We must know Jesus rightly as the Christ (verses 13–20)

People thought Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets. But Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of

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the living God. This confession came not from human wisdom but from God the Father, who had made it known.

The church is built on the faith that believes Jesus is the Christ, and even the power of Hades cannot overcome it.

4. We must not block Jesus' cross with human thoughts (verses 21–23)

When Jesus spoke of His suffering, death, and resurrection, Peter tried to dissuade Him, saying that such things must not happen. But Jesus rebuked Peter, saying that he was mindful not of the things of God but of the things of men.

Salvation is accomplished not through the way of glory and success that man wants, but through Jesus' suffering, cross, and resurrection.

5. We must deny ourselves and take up our own cross (verses 24–28)

The person who follows Jesus must deny himself and take up his own cross. The person who tries only to preserve his own life loses true life, but the person who loses his life for Jesus comes to gain life.

Even if we gain the whole world, it profits us nothing if we lose our own life. The Son of Man will come in glory and reward each person according to what he has done.

Therefore, Matthew chapter 16 teaches us to believe in Jesus not as a mere prophet but as the Christ, the Son of God, to accept His cross and resurrection, and to forsake a self-centered life and follow Jesus to the end.

[Question] 2. In Matthew 16:1, who were the people who asked Jesus to show them a sign?

The people who asked Jesus for a sign were the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven." (Matthew 16:1)

The Pharisees and Sadducees differed from each other in doctrine and political position, but they joined together in opposing and testing Jesus. They did not ask for a sign with a sincere heart in order to believe in Jesus; they demanded a sign from heaven with the intention of testing Jesus and finding fault with Him.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 16:1, from where did the Pharisees and Sadducees ask that a sign be shown?

The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded that Jesus show them a sign coming from heaven.

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven." (Matthew 16:1)

They had already seen Jesus' power in healing the sick, casting out demons, and feeding many people, but they did not believe it and demanded a special sign of their own choosing. This was not a request made in order to believe in Jesus but a demand to test Him and find fault with Him.

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[Question] 4. In Matthew 16:2, 3, how are discerning the face of the sky and failing to discern the signs of the times contrasted?

The reason Jesus spoke using the weather as an example is that the Pharisees and Sadducees could discern the weather by looking at the state of the sky, yet they could not discern the signs of the times revealed through Jesus' words and power.

"He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times." (Matthew 16:2–3)

They could judge the changes of the weather by looking at the color of the sky, but they did not realize the fact that the Christ prophesied in the Old Testament had come and was preaching the Word, healing the sick, and revealing the kingdom of God.

Therefore, Jesus rebuked them, telling them to discern, before demanding a new sign, that the age was the time of salvation in which the Christ had come, through the Word and the power already revealed before them.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 16:4, what sign did Jesus say was the only one to be shown to this generation?

Jesus said that no sign would be shown to a wicked and adulterous generation except the sign of Jonah.

"A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.'

And He left them and departed." (Matthew 16:4)

The Pharisees and Sadducees saw the countless miracles and powerful works Jesus had already performed, and still they did not believe in Him. They demanded a sign from heaven not to know and believe the truth, but to test Jesus and find fault with Him. Therefore, they failed to believe not because signs were lacking, but because of their stubborn hearts, which refused to accept Jesus as the Christ.

The sign of Jonah refers to the event in which the prophet Jonah was in the belly of the great fish and came out again. This event shows in advance that Jesus Christ would die on the cross, be buried, and rise again from the dead in three days. The sign of Jonah, therefore, is the sign showing that salvation would be completed through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus' cross and resurrection cannot be separated from the baptism He received from John. Jesus first received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through that baptism. And bearing the sins He had already taken upon Himself, He was nailed to the cross and died shedding His blood, receiving the punishment of sin, and He rose again in three days, overcoming the power of sin and death.

The cross was not the place where Jesus first received the sins of mankind; it was the place where He was judged for the sins He had taken on through His baptism. And the resurrection testifies that Jesus paid all the wages of sin in full, and that He is the Son of God and the Savior who gives eternal life to those who believe.

Therefore, a person does not need to keep demanding new miracles and signs in order to be saved. God has already shown the clearest sign, saving sinners through the baptism of Jesus Christ, His death on the cross, and His resurrection. True faith is

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not chasing marvelous visible phenomena but accepting in the heart, according to the word of God, the salvation Jesus accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

[Question] 6. In Matthew 16:4, explain what the expression *"a wicked and adulterous generation"* refers to.

"A wicked and adulterous generation" means an unbelieving and spiritually corrupt generation that sees Jesus' words and His many powerful works and still does not believe, and that leaves God and follows its own thoughts and desires.

"A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' And He left them and departed." (Matthew 16:4)

Here, being "wicked" refers to the stubborn attitude that does not believe in Jesus even in the face of clear evidence but rather tries to test Him. Being "adulterous" does not mean only sexual sin; it means spiritual adultery and betrayal, forsaking God and relying on other things.

The Pharisees and Sadducees professed to be the people of God, but they did not accept Jesus, whom God had sent, and kept demanding only the signs they wanted. Jesus rebuked this unbelief and stubbornness as *"a wicked and adulterous generation."*

[Question] 7. In Matthew 16:5, 6, in what situation did Jesus tell His disciples to beware of the leaven?

The lesson to beware of the leaven was given when the

disciples had forgotten to bring bread as they crossed to the other side by boat.

"Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.'" (Matthew 16:5–6)

This word was also given right after the Pharisees and Sadducees had tested Jesus and demanded a sign coming from heaven. Jesus warned His disciples to take heed lest their unbelief and wrong teaching spread to them. The leaven here means not the leaven of actual bread but the wrong teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 16:7, as a teaching about what did the disciples take Jesus' word to beware of the leaven?

The disciples understood *"the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees"* that Jesus spoke of not as a spiritual lesson but as the leaven of the actual bread they ate.

"And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread.'" (Matthew 16:7)

The disciples thought Jesus told them to beware of the leaven because they had not brought bread. But what Jesus warned against was not actual leaven or bread; it was the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which spreads in people's hearts and corrupts their faith.

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[Question] 9. In Matthew 16:8–11, what did Jesus make the disciples, who had misunderstood the leaven as bread, realize?

Jesus rebuked the disciples as *"you of little faith"* and made them realize that His word about the leaven was not about actual bread.

First, Jesus made them remember the following two miracles.

The miracle of the five loaves and two fish, feeding five thousand with five loaves and gathering twelve baskets; and the miracle of the seven loaves and a few fish, feeding four thousand with seven loaves and gathering seven large baskets

"But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'" (Matthew 16:8–11)

Since Jesus could feed a great number of people even with a little food, having no bread was not a problem. The leaven Jesus spoke of was not actual food but the wrong teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. In this way Jesus made them remember the past miracles and revealed the spiritual meaning of His word, correcting the disciples' misunderstanding.

[Question] 10. In Matthew 16:12, what did Jesus mean by telling them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

The word to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees means to guard against their wrong beliefs and unbelieving ideas so that they would not spread in the disciples' hearts.

"Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matthew 16:12)

Specifically, the teachings to guard against are as follows.

Teaching that puts the tradition of men before the word of God; legalism that makes people regard themselves as righteous through outward religious works; hypocrisy that pretends to be devout on the outside while the heart is far from God; unbelief that sees Jesus' words and power and still does not believe but keeps demanding signs; the worldly teaching of the Sadducees, which does not acknowledge the resurrection or the spiritual world; and teaching that does not accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God

Just as a small amount of leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough, wrong teaching may look small at first, but it can corrupt a person's faith and a whole community. Therefore, Jesus warned His disciples to discern false teachings by the standard of the word of God and to keep away from them.

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[Question] 11. In Matthew 16:13, where is Caesarea Philippi, the place where Jesus questioned His disciples about Himself, and what characteristics did it have?

Caesarea Philippi was a city at the foot of Mount Hermon, north of the Sea of Galilee, near the sources of the Jordan River. Today the area is known by the name Banias.

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?'" (Matthew 16:13)

Its characteristics are as follows.

• It was originally called Paneas and was a place where the Greek god Pan was worshiped.

• Philip the tetrarch, a son of Herod the Great, built up the city and named it *"Caesarea"* in honor of Caesar, the Roman emperor.

• To distinguish it from the other Caesarea on the coast, it was called *"Caesarea Philippi"* after Philip's name.

• It was a place where the influence of Gentile religion and Roman culture was stronger than in the region of Judea.

• One of the main sources of the Jordan River was nearby.

In this region, where idols and the authority of the emperor were exalted, Jesus asked His disciples who they believed He was. There Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Caesarea Philippi is therefore the place where Peter's important confession of faith was made.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 16:13, state Jesus' first question.

The first question Jesus asked His disciples at Caesarea Philippi was who men said that the Son of Man was.

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?'" (Matthew 16:13)

Jesus first asked His disciples how the people of that time understood Him. Here, *"Son of Man"* is the title Jesus used to refer to Himself.

[Question] 13. In Matthew 16:14, how did the disciples answer the question of who men said the Son of Man was?

When Jesus asked who men said the Son of Man was, the disciples answered that people thought of Him as follows.

John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets

"So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'" (Matthew 16:14)

People in those days acknowledged Jesus as one of the great prophets, but they did not fully know Him as the Christ, the Son of God.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 16:15, what did Jesus ask the disciples themselves, as His second question?

Jesus' second question was, *"Who do you say that I am?"*

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"He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" (Matthew 16:15)

If the first question asked what people thought of Jesus, the second question was a personal question of faith, asking whom the disciples themselves believed Jesus to be.

[Question] 15. In Matthew 16:16, whom did Peter confess Jesus to be?

Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

"Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'" (Matthew 16:16)

This confession was not a statement acknowledging Jesus merely as a great teacher, a prophet, or a miracle worker. Peter believed and confessed that Jesus is the Savior God promised and the Son of the living God.

The confession *"Lord"* contains the faith that Jesus is the Master who rules Peter's life and faith, and that He is God, who created and governs heaven and earth and all life. Jesus is not someone who became a Savior with man's help; He is God from the beginning, who came into this world in the flesh to save sinners.

"Christ" means the Anointed One, and Jesus is the One who holds the offices of King, Prophet, and High Priest.

As the King of kings, Jesus rules over the power of sin, death, and Satan.

• As the true Prophet, He teaches the will of God and the truth of salvation.

• As the High Priest of heaven, He took upon Himself all the sins of mankind and offered Himself as the sacrifice of

atonement, saving sinners.

As the High Priest of heaven, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He was nailed to the cross and died shedding His blood, receiving the punishment of all sins, and He overcame sin and death by rising from death. In this way Jesus completely accomplished the work of saving sinners in His offices of King, Prophet, and High Priest.

The confession *"the Son of the living God"* means that Jesus is not a mere man but God the Son, who has the same divine nature as God the Father. Jesus actually died on the cross, but He did not remain in death; He rose again, and He is the Lord of life, who lives forever even now.

Peter's confession, therefore, contains together who Jesus is and what work He accomplishes. Jesus is God come in the flesh, the Christ and the Savior, who took the sins of mankind upon Himself and removed them, and who rose again.

Today as well, true faith does not stop at repeating this sentence with the lips. Believing in the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished as the Christ, and receiving Him as one's own God and eternal Savior, is the right confession of faith like Peter's.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 16:17, where did Jesus say the source of Peter's confession of faith came from?

Jesus said that Peter's confession of faith did not come about by human wisdom or knowledge, but because God the Father in heaven had made it known to him.

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon

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Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17)

Here, *"flesh and blood"* means man's natural wisdom or human teaching. Peter was able to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, because God the Father had made him realize that truth. The faith that truly knows Jesus, therefore, is given not by human judgment but by the revelation of God.

[Question] 17. In Matthew 16:18, what meaning is there in Jesus' calling Simon "*Peter*"?

The name *"Peter"* means a stone or a rock in Greek. After Simon confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus showed that Simon had the apostolic mission of testifying to the foundation of the church.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

This name carries the following meanings.

Simon was to become a man of firm faith who confessed Jesus as the Christ.

As an apostle, Peter took on an important role in testifying to Jesus Christ and establishing the early church.

The church is built not on Peter's human ability as an individual but on the truth he confessed, that Jesus is the Christ and the Son of God.

The new name *"Peter,"* therefore, does not mean that Simon's character was perfect from the start; it means that he received a rocklike mission to testify to Jesus Christ and serve the church. The owner and builder of the church is Jesus, who said *"My church."*

[Question] 18. In Matthew 16:18, what does it mean that Jesus called the church *"My church"*?

Jesus' calling the church *"My church"* means that the owner and Head of the church is Jesus Christ, and that the church is a community established and governed by Him.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

The church is not a human organization founded by some person, minister, or particular denomination for its own will and purposes. It is the community of faith that Jesus, the Son of God, established by saving sinners, calling them together, and giving them the Word and the Holy Spirit. The true ownership of the church, therefore, belongs not to man but to Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, *"On this rock I will build My church."* The rock here does not mean the character or ability of Peter as one human being. It refers to the faith with which Peter believed and confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and to Jesus Christ, the object of that confession. The Lord's church is built on the rock of the faith that rightly knows and believes who Jesus is and how He saved sinners.

Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was nailed to the cross, dying shedding His blood and receiving the judgment of sin, and rose again from death, completing salvation. Those who believe this salvation in their hearts, receive the remission of all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit make up the Lord's church.

The Lord's church, therefore, does not simply mean a group of people who gather in a church building or have their names on a membership roll. It is the community of those who have

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received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished, who are united in the word of God, and who preach this gospel to souls still in sin.

Jesus' word calling the church *"My church"* also contains the meaning that the Lord Himself keeps and leads the church. The workers of the church are servants entrusted with the Lord's work, not owners of the church. Therefore, no one may privatize the church by putting forward his own thoughts and desires, or alter the gospel to suit man's will. The church must always be served with the Lord's word and the gospel of salvation at its center.

Moreover, because the church belongs to the Lord, even the power of Hades cannot overcome it. Satan tries to destroy the church with false teachings, the temptations of the world, and persecution, but the truth of salvation that Jesus Christ completed does not change. Through the church that believes and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord saves sinners and expands His kingdom.

Therefore, the word *"My church"* means that the owner of the church is Jesus Christ, that the church is built on Christ and the gospel of salvation He accomplished, and that it is the community that carries out the mission of saving souls according to the Lord's will.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 16:18, what do *"the gates of Hades"* refer to?

"The gates of Hades" refer to the power of Satan the devil, who dominates people through sin and death. Hades here means the realm the dead enter and the power of death, and it includes

the power of the devil, who tries to condemn people with sin and drag them into death and destruction.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

The rock Jesus spoke of is not Peter as an individual; it refers to the faith Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* and to the truth of salvation contained in that confession. On this rock of faith Jesus established the Church of God, the assembly of those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was nailed to the cross, dying shedding His blood, and rose again from death, overcoming the power of sin, death, and Satan. Therefore, the devil can no longer make a person who has received the remission of sins by believing this gospel of salvation into a sinner again, nor drag him into eternal death.

The word that *"the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"* does not mean that the Church of God suffers no persecution or hardship in the world. The saints may be persecuted or suffer bodily death, but Satan cannot take away the gospel of salvation they believe or their eternal life. For just as Jesus rose from death, the righteous who believe the gospel will also rise again.

This word, therefore, is Jesus' promise that no attack of sin, death, or Satan can destroy the Church of God built on the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that they cannot take away the salvation and faith of the saints who believe that gospel.

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[Question] 20. In Matthew 16:19, explain the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the authority to bind and loose on earth that Jesus spoke of to Peter.

Jesus said that He would give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter, who had confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that what was bound and loosed on earth would be done the same way in heaven.

"And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'" (Matthew 16:19)

The keys of the kingdom of heaven do not mean that Peter as an individual was given the power to send people to heaven or hell at will. The key that opens the gate of heaven is the truth of salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the faith that believes it. Because Peter rightly knew and confessed who Jesus is, he was entrusted with the office of testifying to this gospel.

Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and was nailed to the cross, dying shedding His blood and receiving the judgment of sin, and rose again from death, completing salvation. The person who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of all his sins and obtains the qualification to enter the kingdom of heaven. To use the keys of the kingdom of heaven, therefore, is to preach this gospel of salvation accurately to sinners so that they may receive the remission of sin by faith.

To loose on earth means to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit so that a person who was bound in sin believes that gospel and receives remission from all his sins. The person

who has believed the gospel not only receives the remission of sin on this earth; since God also acknowledges that faith, he becomes one loosed from sin in heaven as well. He is no longer a sinner to be judged but a righteous person clothed in the righteousness of God and a child of God.

Conversely, to bind on earth does not mean that a church or a minister condemns someone by his own judgment. The person who hears the true gospel Jesus Christ accomplished and still does not believe it remains bound to sin and judgment, because his sins remain in his heart as they are. Since this is the result of rejecting the word of salvation God has established, his sins remain unloosed in heaven as well.

The standard of the authority to bind and loose, therefore, is not human feelings or the church's man-made rules but the word of the gospel God has completed. A person is not loosed from sin because he treats an evangelist well or gives many offerings, nor does he enter heaven because he has a humanly close relationship with a church leader. Only when he believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart is he loosed from sin.

This authority did not remain with Peter alone; it was entrusted to the Church of God and to the workers of the gospel who have the same faith as Peter. The church is not a place that removes people's sins by its own power but a place that testifies with the Word to the remission of sin Jesus has already completed. To the person who believes the gospel, it must testify on the basis of God's word that his sins have been remitted; to the person who does not believe, it must make known that he is still under sin and judgment.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven and the authority to bind and loose, therefore, are not a religious power to dominate people but a spiritual authority to preach the gospel of the water

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and the Spirit, loosing sinners from sin and judgment and leading them to the kingdom of heaven. The Lord's church must not use these keys for its own gain, but must faithfully carry out the mission of preaching the gospel, opening the door of salvation to the souls of the whole world.

[Question] 21. In Matthew 16:20, after Peter's confession, what did Jesus command the disciples not to tell?

Right after Peter's confession of faith, Jesus commanded His disciples to tell no one that He was the Christ.

"Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ." (Matthew 16:20)

In those days many people expected the Christ to be a political king who would liberate Israel from the rule of Rome. If that fact had been wrongly spread before Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection were accomplished, it could have aroused people's political expectations and misunderstandings.

Therefore, Jesus told His disciples not to make that fact known until, at the time God had appointed, He completed the work of salvation through the cross and the resurrection, after receiving the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John.

[Question] 22. In Matthew 16:21, how did Jesus speak of the suffering, death, and resurrection He would undergo?

Jesus told His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem,

suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, be killed, and rise again on the third day.

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day." (Matthew 16:21)

The words *"from that time"* point to the time after Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. When the disciples had come to confess who Jesus is, Jesus began for the first time to teach plainly what work of salvation He must accomplish as the Christ.

Jesus first said that He would go up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the place where He would be rejected by the religious leaders and suffer the cross and death. The elders, chief priests, and scribes prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures and the Law, yet they failed to recognize and rejected the very Christ whom the Old Testament testifies to.

Jesus did not speak only of His suffering many things and being killed; He made it clear that He must rise again on the third day. Jesus' death, therefore, was not an unexpected failure or tragedy. He knew in advance what He would undergo, and He willingly went that way to fulfill the Father's will of saving sinners.

The reason Jesus had to suffer and die is that He had already taken the sins of mankind upon Himself. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who bore the sin of the world, had to receive all the punishment and curse of sin by being nailed to the cross and dying shedding His blood.

The cross, therefore, was not the place where Jesus first received the sins of mankind. Jesus had already taken on the sins

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at the Jordan River, and on the cross He received the judgment of those sins. As the sinless Son of God bore suffering and death in our place, the justice and the love of God were fulfilled together.

Jesus' work of salvation did not end with His death on the cross. As He had said, He rose again from the dead on the third day. The resurrection testifies that Jesus paid all the wages of sin completely and that He is the Son of God, who overcame the power of sin, death, and Satan. The person who believes in Jesus' resurrection has eternal life and the hope of resurrection.

Matthew 16:21, therefore, is the word in which Jesus revealed in advance that He would save sinners by suffering and dying in Jerusalem and rising again. Jesus' baptism, His death on the cross, and His resurrection are not separate events; they are one work of salvation that God planned and Jesus Christ completed to remove all the sins of mankind.

[Question] 23. In Matthew 16:22, what did Peter say as he took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him?

Peter took hold of Jesus and pleaded, *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"*

"Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!'" (Matthew 16:22)

Peter could not accept the word that Jesus would suffer and die. He tried to dissuade Him out of a heart that loved Jesus, but he did not realize that the suffering and death of the cross were indispensable to God's plan of salvation.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 16:23, explain the meaning of Jesus' word to Peter, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"*

Jesus' rebuke means that even though Peter spoke with a good intention, his thought of blocking the cross was hindering God's plan of salvation and playing the same role as Satan's will.

"But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.'" (Matthew 16:23)

This word contains the following meanings.

Jesus did not define Peter himself as Satan. He rebuked him sternly because Peter's words played the same role as Satan's temptation, trying to turn Jesus away from the way of the cross.

Peter thought only of glory without suffering, but God's will was that Jesus, after receiving the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, would save sinners through His death on the cross and His resurrection.

The word *"Get behind Me"* means that Peter must not block or try to direct Jesus' way, but must return to the place of a disciple and follow Him.

Even a thought that looks good and reasonable from a human standpoint can become a hindrance that makes the Lord stumble if it goes against God's will and plan of salvation.

This rebuke, therefore, teaches that the disciples must think of God's will before the thoughts of men, and must follow Jesus instead of trying to avoid the cross.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 16:24, what is required of the person who wants to follow Jesus?

The person who will follow Jesus is the one who denies

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himself, takes up his own cross, and follows Him.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matthew 16:24)

The person who follows Jesus needs the following attitudes.

• Denying oneself: not making one's own thoughts and desires the master of one's life, but giving priority to Jesus' will.

• Taking up one's own cross: willingly accepting the sacrifices and sufferings that come in following Jesus and the gospel.

• Following Jesus: not merely saying that one believes, but obeying Jesus' word and walking the way He walked.

A disciple of Jesus, therefore, is a person who lays down a self-centered life and, even in hardship, obeys the Lord's will and follows Him to the end.

[Question] 26. In Matthew 16:25, with what paradox did Jesus speak of saving one's life and losing it?

The most difficult paradox to interpret is the word that whoever tries to save his own life will rather lose it, and whoever loses his life for Jesus will rather find it.

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:25)

This word means the following.

The person who rejects Jesus in order to keep only his own life, safety, and gain may preserve the life of the flesh for a while, but in the end he loses eternal life.

The person who willingly gives up even his own gain and life for Jesus and the gospel may seem to lose in the world, but

he obtains true and eternal life in Jesus.

This does not mean that we should harm our own lives. It is the paradox that holding on to a self-centered life is not the way to gain true life, but believing in Jesus and offering oneself for Him is the way to obtain eternal life.

[Question] 27. In Matthew 16:26, what was it that Jesus said could not be exchanged for a person's life?

Jesus compared a person's life with the whole world.

"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

Even if a person gains all the wealth, power, and honor of the world, they are of no benefit to him if he loses his own life. Moreover, eternal life once lost cannot be bought back with anything in the world.

Jesus taught, therefore, that the value of one soul and its life is more precious than the whole world, and that gaining eternal life is more important than gaining the things of the world.

[Question] 28. In Matthew 16:27, how did Jesus speak of the coming of the Son of Man and what will take place at that time?

Jesus described His second coming as the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father with His angels. He said that at that time He would reward each person according to what he has done.

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"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matthew 16:27)

Jesus' first coming was His coming humbly in the flesh as the Savior, but His second coming is His coming in the glory and power of God the Father, together with the angels. At that time Jesus, as the Judge, will judge each person's faith and life and reward him according to his deeds.

[Question] 29. In Matthew 16:28, What did Jesus say some standing there would see before they died?

Jesus said that some of those standing there with Him would see the Son of Man coming with His royal authority before they died.

"Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.'" (Matthew 16:28)

This word is mainly understood as referring to the event of the Mount of Transfiguration, which appears in the very next chapter. Peter, James, and John saw Jesus' appearance gloriously transformed on a high mountain. In the event of the Transfiguration, the appearance of Jesus, who will come in royal authority and glory, was shown in advance.

There is also an interpretation that it includes Jesus' resurrection and ascension and the manifestation of the power of the kingdom of God, but in the context the event of the Mount of Transfiguration corresponds to its most direct fulfillment. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The church built on Christ, forsaking the leaven of men

< Matthew 16:1-20 >

"Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, 'When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.' And He left them and departed. Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. Then Jesus said to them, 'Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have taken no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the

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leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ."

The people who asked for a sign and yet did not believe in the Lord

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and asked Him to show them a sign from heaven. But their request was not an earnest question asked in order to believe in Jesus. The text makes it clear that they were trying to test Him. Jesus had already healed countless sick people, cast out demons, and performed the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and a few fish, yet they still demanded another sign.

When people have no heart to believe, they say they cannot believe because the evidence is insufficient. But a heart that is

determined not to believe puts forward yet another condition, however much evidence it sees. It says it will believe if it is shown a sign, but after seeing a sign it attributes it to coincidence or human ability. In the end, the problem lies not in the number of miracles before their eyes but in the heart that refuses to accept the word of God.

The Pharisees regarded the Law and religious works as important. They were zealous in keeping a devout appearance and their traditions, but they did not accept Jesus Christ, whom the Law and the Prophets testified to. The Sadducees held on to religious power and the existing order and did not believe in the resurrection or the spiritual world. The two groups differed in their ideas, but they were the same in that they did not believe in the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplishes.

Today as well, people can call on the name of Jesus and yet not believe in the salvation He accomplished. There are cases where religious manners and good deeds, devout living and theological knowledge are emphasized, while it is not clearly known how Jesus took on and removed the sin of the world. If we speak loudly only of what man must do and think little of what God has already done, that faith has missed the center of the gospel.

The faith that discerns the signs of the times

Jesus rebuked the people because they could discern the weather by looking at the evening sky and the morning sky, yet they could not discern the signs of the times. The people of that day had the wisdom to observe the changes of nature, but they failed to recognize the fact that the promised Messiah had come before them. The promises of the Old Testament were

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being fulfilled in Jesus' words and ministry, yet they did not accept it because of their own thoughts and their religious vested interests.

To discern the times is not merely to grasp how the politics and economy of the world are changing. It is to realize within the Word where God's history of salvation is heading, and what work God has now entrusted to the church and to believers. If we are sensitive to the changes of the world but indifferent to the gospel being damaged and the teachings of men replacing the truth, we cannot be said to be discerning the spiritual times.

What we need is not an eye that chases marvelous phenomena but an eye that examines the will of God within the Scriptures. If visible miracles become the foundation of faith, we seem to believe in God when circumstances are good, but we are easily shaken when hardship comes. But the person who knows and believes through the Word who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished can stand on the gospel even when the times and circumstances change.

Jesus said that no sign would be shown to a wicked and adulterous generation except the sign of Jonah. The event in which Jonah entered the belly of the great fish and came out points to Jesus' death and resurrection. The surest sign God has given mankind is the event in which Jesus Christ came to this earth to save sinners, took our sins upon Himself, died on the cross, and rose again from the dead.

The completion of salvation contained in the sign of Jonah

Jesus' death and resurrection were not a tragedy and a

recovery that happened by chance. Jesus, who came to this earth as the sinless Son of God, took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Just as in the Old Testament a sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins on to it, in the New Testament the sin of the world went over to Jesus when John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Him.

Bearing the sins He had taken on in that way, Jesus was nailed to the cross and died shedding His blood. The death of the cross was not an event in which one sinless man died unjustly; it was the event in which Jesus, who had taken the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins in our place. And the Lord rose again on the third day, overcoming sin and death and becoming the eternal Savior of those who believe.

The water signifies the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, and the blood signifies the punishment of sin He received on the cross. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and that the salvation accomplished by the water and the blood is true. The gospel of the water and the Spirit, therefore, leads us to believe in Jesus' birth, the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection as one complete salvation.

There is no sign greater than this gospel. Even if a person sees fire come down from heaven or experiences an amazing healing, if the sin of his heart remains as it is, that cannot lead his soul to heaven. On the other hand, even if a person has never experienced a visible miracle, if he believes that Jesus removed all his sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection, he receives the

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remission of sin and eternal life. God has given us this word of salvation as the ground of our faith.

The wrong teaching that spreads in the heart

When the disciples had forgotten to bring bread, Jesus told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. At first the disciples understood this word as being about the bread of the flesh. But Jesus was telling them to guard against their doctrine, not the leaven of bread.

Even a small amount of leaven spreads through the whole lump of dough. Wrong teaching is the same. At first it looks like a small difference, but once it is received into the heart, it corrupts the whole gospel. If people add a little human work to the word that Jesus removed all sins once and for all, and begin to teach that to receive the remission of sins one must wash away one's sins daily with prayers of repentance, they end up relying on their own works.

The leaven of the Pharisees exalts the righteousness of man above the righteousness of God. It makes people claim to believe in Jesus while making their own piety and good deeds, their keeping of the Law and their religious career, the ground of their salvation. The leaven of the Sadducees confines the power of God and spiritual truth within human reason and present reality. It makes people not actually believe in the resurrection, the judgment, heaven, and eternal life, and turns religion into a means of gaining benefit in this world.

The two teachings, though different in form, are the same in that they keep people from fully believing in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. The one adds human works, and the other subtracts the uncomfortable parts from the word of God.

But true faith does not fit the word of God to man's thinking. It places its own thoughts under the Word and accepts the salvation God has spoken, just as it is.

Jesus told the disciples to remember the miracles of the five loaves and two fish and of the seven loaves and a few fish. It means that they should not look only at the reality of having no bread but remember the power of the Lord that had already worked. When faith grows small, we hear even spiritual words only as worries of the flesh. But when we remember that the Lord saved us from sin and has led us to this day, we can see beyond the lack before our eyes and understand the meaning of His word.

"Who do you say that I am?"

In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples who men said He was. People thought He was John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. They acknowledged Jesus as a great figure, but they did not know Him as the Son of the living God and the Christ, the Savior.

After hearing people's assessments, Jesus asked His disciples directly: *"Who do you say that I am?"* Salvation is not attained by knowing how the people of the world evaluate Jesus. Each person must have a clear faith in his heart as to who Jesus is. Thinking of Jesus as an excellent teacher or a saint who taught love is entirely different from believing in Him as one's own God and Savior.

Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Christ means the Anointed One, and it refers to the One who fulfills all the offices of King, High Priest, and Prophet. Jesus is the King of kings and the Owner of all creation. As the

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High Priest of heaven, He personally took the sins of His people upon Himself and paid the price of those sins. And as the Prophet, He has made known to us the will of God and the truth of salvation.

To believe in Jesus as the Christ is not merely to recite that title with the lips. It is to believe in the heart that Jesus is God; that He took over our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the cross, saving us; and that He rose again and is the Lord who lives even now. In this confession, Jesus' divinity, His work of salvation, and the authority of His Word are contained together.

Jesus said that the One who had made this known to Peter was not flesh and blood but His Father in heaven. A true confession of faith is not produced by human wisdom or learning alone. It comes from the heart when we hear through the Scriptures the salvation God has accomplished and accept the testimony of the Holy Spirit. We must therefore listen not to people's popular opinions but to whom God testifies Jesus to be.

The Lord's church built on the rock

Jesus said to Peter, *"On this rock I will build My church."* The church is not built on a person's fame or the size of an organization. It is built on the faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God—on the rocklike confession of Jesus Christ and the salvation He accomplished.

The church is the assembly that calls sinners out of the world, lets them hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and enables those who believe to receive the remission of sins and become God's people. Having a building does not make a

church, nor does a long history or a large membership automatically make it the Lord's church. Where Jesus Christ is the Head, where the gospel He accomplished is preached, and where believers who have received the remission of sins by believing that gospel gather—that is the Church of God.

The Lord said that the power of Hades would not prevail against the church. This does not mean that the church experiences no hardship in the world. The church can be persecuted and criticized, and it can look weak outwardly. But the devil cannot destroy the salvation Jesus Christ completed, and the power of death cannot take away the eternal life of those who believe that gospel.

Believers do not overcome the devil because their own strength is great. They overcome because they believe the truth that Jesus removed all sins and rose again. The devil tries to condemn us as sinners by digging up our shortcomings and past faults, but faith holds on to the fact that Jesus already took on our sins and was judged through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the cross. A heart that stands on this rock does not easily collapse with changing circumstances.

Those entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven

Jesus said that He would give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The keys of the kingdom of heaven are not a power by which a man arbitrarily decides another person's salvation or destruction. They refer to the gospel of the remission of sin that Jesus Christ accomplished through the water and the Spirit. If we believe this gospel, we are loosed from all the sins of our hearts and enter the kingdom of God; if we do not believe, we

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remain bound under sin.

Peter and the apostles were entrusted with delivering this gospel to the world. The gospel they preached was the news that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that He fulfilled all righteousness to save sinners. The key of the kingdom of heaven the church must deliver today is the same. It must preach not words that subject people to a particular organization or leader, but the gospel Jesus Christ completed.

The authority that opens the gate of heaven does not come from the personal greatness of the evangelist. It lies in the word of the gospel itself. Even if the one who preaches is lacking, if he rightly preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit written in the Scriptures and the hearer believes it, the hearer receives the remission of sins. Conversely, however famous the speaker may be, if he leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the cross and teaches human merit, that teaching cannot loose anyone from sin.

The church, therefore, must guard the keys of the kingdom of heaven as precious. It must not blur the content of the gospel to suit the fashion of the age or preach only what people like to hear. It must preach clearly what sin is and why it must be judged, how Jesus took on sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and how He completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection.

Those who have believed this gospel also take part in sharing the keys of the kingdom of heaven. We can preach the gospel with our mouths, distribute the literature of the gospel, and prepare the way of evangelism with prayer, material support, and service. The best thing the church can do is to let even one more soul hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins. This is the fruit that the faith confessing Jesus as the Christ bears in life.

The spiritual discernment that guards the gospel

The person entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven needs, along with zeal to preach the gospel, discernment to guard it. Not every religious word is the word of God, and not everything that uses the name of Jesus is the same gospel. We must examine whether a teaching exalts man or the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and whether it entrusts the remission of sins to human works or to the salvation the Lord has completed.

Wrong leaven usually does not approach us in a form that has nothing to do with the truth. It speaks parts of the Bible and emphasizes godliness and love, while leaving out the fact that Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, or making the judgment of the cross incomplete. So it makes people confess that they are still sinners even though they believe in Jesus, and makes them constantly rely on new works to wash away their sins.

The right life of a believer that the Bible speaks of is important. The person who has received the remission of sins must not follow the lusts of the flesh but must live a life that pleases God. But a holy life is not a condition of salvation; it is the fruit borne after receiving salvation. If the order of root and fruit is reversed, a person comes back under the condemnation of the Law, and he either boasts of his own deeds or is discouraged by his shortcomings.

To discern the gospel, we must listen to the Word steadily and keep it in our hearts. The mere career of having attended church for a long time cannot overcome leaven. We must confirm repeatedly through the Scriptures who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished through the water and the Spirit. We must share the fellowship of the gospel within the

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church, and when our thoughts differ from the Word, we must humble our hearts before the Word.

Discernment is not knowledge for condemning others. It is first the work of keeping one's own heart from being stained by the righteousness of man and the wisdom of the world. It is also the love that preaches the gospel of the complete remission of sin to those who are carrying the burden of sin under wrong teaching, so that they may gain freedom. The more clearly a person knows the truth, the more he must remember that he too was saved by grace, and preach the gospel with gentleness rather than becoming proud.

The Lord does this work through His church today as well. The church must not change the gospel according to the popularity of the age or the number of people, but must consistently testify to the water, the blood, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. When believers stand on this truth, hold up one another's faith, and deliver the keys of the kingdom of heaven to the world, the power of Hades cannot stop that work.

We must have the faith that believes the Word, not the faith that chases signs. We must not receive the leaven of men but keep in our hearts the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. The confession *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* must not remain mere knowledge but become our actual faith. On that faith the Lord's church is built, and through that church the keys of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, are delivered to the ends of the earth. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God

< Matthew 16:13-19 >

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"

The Lord came to this earth and performed many miracles. He is our Lord, who fed five thousand with a single lunch and still had twelve baskets left over, and four thousand with seven loaves. We also see in the Scriptures the Lord, who raised the dead. That Lord asked His disciples, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Jesus asked this question of His disciples, and He asks it of us today. Who do you say that I am? Whom do you believe

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Me to be? That is the question.

The question asked after the miracle of the five loaves and two fish

In the passage just before this, the Lord performed the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. A great crowd filled the field like a sea of people. Many people had gathered before Jesus, but when mealtime came there was no way to feed them. So the Lord told them to bring a small lunch. When He asked what they had, one person brought a lunch box. When they opened it, there were a few small fish and five loaves of barley bread in it.

The Lord took this and gave thanks. Then He had the disciples seat all the people, and told them to take the food and distribute it. At the moment the Lord blessed it, the bread and the fish multiplied greatly. That the disciples carried baskets around means that the food had increased that much. A little before, the people had gathered like mountains and like the sea, and now the bread had multiplied as much. Even after distributing it like that, twelve baskets were left over.

"Who do you say that I am?"

After such a miracle, the Lord asked at once. Jesus was asking His disciples, and He is asking us today as well: *"Who do you say that I am?"* When He asked, they all kept silent. But the one who always stepped forward first was Peter. Peter answered right away: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Hearing that answer, Jesus said: Your faith is truly

good. You did not come to know this by yourself; My Father in heaven has taught it to you. On the rock of that faith I will build My church, and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord asks us as well. Whom do you believe Me to be? Whom do you think Me to be? That is the question. Some people think of Jesus as one of the four great sages. Some think of Him only as the Son of God, and others only as a Savior. There are many who speak in such short answers. But Peter did not answer in a short phrase like that. He confessed comprehensively and completely: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

The three offices contained in the name Christ

In this confession that the Lord is the Christ, three meanings are contained. First, You are the King—the King of kings, and God. Second, You are the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven—the High Priest who came to save mankind from sin. Third, You are the true Prophet—the Savior and God who came to this earth to deliver the true Word. This is the confession Peter made: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

You came to this earth holding these three offices. You are the One who carries out these three offices—as God, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, and as the true Prophet who came to this earth. And You are also the Son of the true God. Peter confessed even that much. So it was not a short answer. Whom do we think Jesus to be, and whom do we believe Him to be?

Do you believe that Jesus is God? Do you believe that He is

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God, who created the universe? The Scripture says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)*. That God who created is none other than Jesus. It says, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3)*. Then who made this world? The Word says that Jesus made it. Do you believe that this Jesus is God, who created the universe, the almighty and all-knowing God?

Jesus, who became the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven

Second, do you believe that Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, who came to save mankind from sin? If we know and believe that Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, we believe like this: Jesus was born on this earth in the flesh of man. And so that every sinner might receive the remission of sins and enter heaven only by believing in Him, He took all our sins upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, died on the cross for us, and rose again from death. Any sinner who believes in Jesus as his own Savior receives salvation. As the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus took our sins upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And He was nailed to the cross, died, and rose again from death, enabling us to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The Christ, who saved us through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

So Jesus Himself became the gate of heaven for us. He became our Savior and our Shepherd. This is what we believe. In the confession that the Lord is the Christ, this very confession is contained. To save me, Jesus laid aside for a while His almightiness and His being God in the kingdom of heaven and came to this earth. He was born in the flesh of man, and He took my sins and yours—the sins of all mankind—upon His own body through the baptism He received from John. Not passing sins onto the head of an animal, He took our sins upon His own body. Jesus received my sins and yours passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death, saving us.

Therefore, Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. And He taught this fact truly, in the role of the Prophet. *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* The One who saved us, who taught us this truth, the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and who revealed to us His being God, the Creator, and our Savior—He is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.

Whom do you think Me to be? Do you think of Me only as God? Or only as a Savior? We must know all three of these. Jesus also carried out the role of the Prophet. Concerning Jesus, some said He was Elijah, some said John the Baptist, some said Jeremiah, and others said one of the prophets. A prophet is one who delivers the word of God—one who delivers the true truth. Then, do we truly believe in Him this way?

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The God who formed man from the dust is our Savior

Do we truly believe this? It says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)*. When God said, Let there be, there came to be the land, the plants, the birds flying in the sky, and all kinds of fish in the water. After creating them, on the sixth day He formed man from the dust and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, making man a living being who would never die. The One who made him is none other than Jesus. He is the very God who came to save me and you.

That God has removed our sins. He came to this earth, took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, saved me and you from sin, and became the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. Living on this earth, you and I commit many sins through our many weaknesses. All those sins—without leaving even one, even a single grain, even a jot—He took upon Himself once and for all through the baptism He received from John. And bearing those sins, He died on the cross to solve the problem of that sin. He died and rose again, so that we might obtain the qualification to enter the eternal kingdom of God.

How amazing this is! Whom do you think Me to be? Do you think of Me as the Christ? Do you believe so? Do you believe, everyone? The Lord asked Peter that question. Jesus asked His disciples that question.

The other disciples kept silent. But Peter did not call the Lord Teacher. He confessed, Lord, You are my Master and my God. What did Judas do? Judas called Him Teacher. What is the most disgraceful word for a person who believes in Jesus? It is the word Teacher. People who have not been born again

call one another Teacher even while professing to believe in Jesus. But we call one another brothers and sisters. That is the difference.

The Lord has saved us, and we believe that fact. The question is whether we really believe it. We do believe. I believe so. Do you also believe so?

Jesus is our Christ and our God

Everyone, the person who knows and believes this fact has a qualification. He has the qualification to work in the Church of God, the qualification to enter the kingdom of heaven, and the qualification to preach the gospel to others and lead them to salvation. The Lord tells us this. Not just anyone has this qualification. It is the qualification given to the person who confesses, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

There are people who believe that Jesus is our Christ, our God, and our Savior. Whatever shortcomings and faults you and I may have, the Lord took all those sins upon His own body once and for all through the baptism He received from John, sacrificed Himself, and saved us completely. He is truly the King of love. My Shepherd is the King of love and my shield in tribulation; He is our eternal King of love. He took all our faults upon Himself, received the judgment Himself, and bore even our death. And He rose again by His own power, brought us into the kingdom of heaven, judged all sin, and saved us. Do you believe this fact, everyone?

So the Lord asked His disciples this question. And Peter, as the representative of the disciples, made the confession. The Lord said, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and*

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whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19).

Everyone, this is why we must be careful about making enemies of God's people. We must know that doing strange things to the Church of God is not doing them to a man. Peter is an ambassador of Jesus Christ, the King of kings of the kingdom of heaven. So if someone treats that ambassador carelessly, does not believe the ambassador's words, and persecutes him, it is the same as doing it to God. If an ambassador of one nation goes to another nation and is ignored and treated carelessly there, it is exactly the same as despising and insulting the nation itself. It is treated the same way. We must know this.

The person who accepts the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives salvation

To the person who believes the fact that the Lord is the Christ, the Lord has given such authority. He has given such a blessing. Therefore, the person who accepts and believes this news of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach today receives salvation. But the person who does not accept this gospel and stands against it is standing against God, and so he cannot receive salvation. The person who can work in the church, the person who can serve the Church of God, is the person who has this faith that the Lord is the Christ. Such people do this blessed work.

The Lord asks me and you. I also ask you. Whom do you think the Lord to be? Whom do you think the Lord to be? You must confess it with your heart. Though I commit many wrongs, I must believe that the Lord took all my sins upon His

own body, received the judgment of all my sins in my place, and, proclaiming death, led me into the kingdom of heaven. We must become people who believe and are assured in heart that He has established us—even while living on this earth—as people without sin, as people who can work in the Church of God, and as ambassadors of heaven who can preach the gospel to others.

We are channels of God's blessing

Only then can we truly be called God's people and God's workers. Through such people God spreads His blessing to this world. We are channels of blessing. The person who blesses us receives blessing, and the person who curses us receives a curse. God said to Abraham, *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you."* Abraham was a channel of blessing. You and I are also channels of blessing. Therefore we must know this clearly and believe it clearly.

Even if we do not know everything in the Bible, we must hold on to this confession: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* That Jesus is the Son of God goes without saying. Why is Jesus God? He is God because He created the universe. That is not something for us to dispute but something to accept and believe as it is. The question is whether Jesus became the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven or not. Everyone, right there the victory or defeat is decided. It is whether we acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ or not. I acknowledge it. I believe it. You too must believe this fact. The person who does not believe cannot reach salvation.

We must not believe merely on our own that Jesus is God and my Savior. We must not believe blindly, just fitting

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ourselves into a doctrine. We must believe according to the Word: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Countless people in the world say that Jesus is the Christ, but they say that He saved us only by shedding His blood on the cross. How could that be the complete Christ?

Jesus, as the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, came to this earth in the flesh of man. To take on my sins and yours, He received our sins passed on to His own flesh through the baptism He received from John. And He was nailed to the cross, received the judgment of sin, and went to His death, suffering in our place the death for our sins and enduring every insult. And He rose again, giving new life to me and you—to those who believe. Everyone, we must believe this completely. If a person just believes blindly on his own and only asks for the Holy Spirit to work in his heart, he ends up in hell instead. In that way he cannot overcome the flesh, cannot know the will of God, and cannot follow the will of God.

The Scriptures testify only to Jesus Christ

Why is the Word here? The Word is recorded here to teach the truth to me and you—that is, it carries out the role of the prophet. All that the Lord spoke was recorded and given to us. Jesus came to this earth two thousand years ago and then departed. If what He did had not been recorded in this Word, how could we hear what He did, how could we chew it over and reflect on it? How could we believe? Faith must have evidence and must have a ground. This Word is called the truth, the Canon, and the measuring rod of faith.

This word of God was recorded over more than a thousand years. Concerning one Person alone, Jesus Christ, people

recorded and died, and others were born and recorded and died, over and over. Yet when it was bound into one book, it was called 'the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. What people recorded over those long ages is compressed into a single book, and whom does it all speak of? It speaks of Jesus. He is God and the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. He took the sins of me and you—of all people—upon Himself once and for all through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was nailed to the cross and died, and rose again, giving new life to those who believe.

If all this is compressed into one sentence, what was recorded over those long ages speaks in the end of one Person, Jesus. Everyone, is there any human being who is written about across many centuries? When one man writes, that is the end of it. But because this One is the living God, He encompasses everything, from the creation of the heavens and the earth to the judgment of Revelation, and even to the remission of our sins. He is the main figure of mankind and the main figure of history. History in English is 'history,' which means His story. It is the history of Jesus, the history of God, the history of our Savior, the history of the High Priest, and the history of the Prophet. When we know and believe like this, we come to have the same faith as Peter. And we also come to do the same work as Peter. You too must believe this fact in your hearts.

Most sermons usually divide the text into parts and expound them bit by bit, but today I have spoken of all of it together, in summary. This is the confession that the Lord is the Christ. I said that Jesus is the High Priest; there were high priests in the Old Testament as well. The high priest of the Old Testament laid his hands on an animal and passed a year's sins onto it. But Jesus came to this earth and, like a high priest, received baptism from John the Baptist, taking over not one

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year's sins but all the sins of this world. That is how we know and believe. That is the remission of sin.

That Jesus is the High Priest—that He is the Son of the living God and the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven—is the evidence that He took our sins upon His own body. Jesus actually came to this earth and received baptism from John the Baptist, taking upon Himself all the sins that you and I commit throughout our whole lives. Those wretched and shameful sins, the disgraceful sins committed in secret, all those sins we fear anyone might discover—He took them all upon Himself. He received baptism and took our sins upon His own body, and He received the judgment Himself so that we would not be judged. And He rose again. We can receive the remission of sin only by believing in Jesus. So when we believe in our Savior and in what He has done, saying, Lord, help me and save me, you and I receive salvation. Those who believe have received salvation. Do you believe, everyone?

Plant the Word in your heart by faith

The word Christ is a truly important word. It must not remain mere theory. It must be planted in the heart. In the cold of winter, people cover a seedbed with vinyl, sow seed, and let the seedlings grow. When they have grown to a certain point, the vinyl is removed, and in spring the paddy is plowed and filled with water to prepare for planting the seedlings. In the same way, if the word of Scripture is the truth, our heart is like that paddy field. In that field we must plant the word we have heard. And the secret of planting it is faith. It is believing: So this is how the Lord saved me; to make me sinless and bring me into the kingdom of heaven, He became the High Priest of

the kingdom of heaven; He became my Savior.

When we plant the Word in our hearts by faith like this, we receive salvation. Everyone, do you understand? It must be planted. If we do not plant it in our own heart, it is vain. If it remains only theory, it is vain. That is called theoretical, intellectual faith. It must be planted in the heart. When we plant it like that and believe, from then on the Lord works. We do not even need to pray separately, asking the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts. When we plant the word of God in our hearts by faith, the Holy Spirit then comes into our hearts and works. He gives us understanding when we hear the Word, strength when we preach the gospel, and wisdom and blessing in the work we do, and He leads us and keeps us.

Engrave that fact on your heart and believe in the blessing God has given. Those who have this faith are workers of the kingdom of God and ambassadors of Christ, who deliver God's blessing to this world. I believe that God has given this blessing to me and you. With this I close the message. Thank you. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Have the right faith like Peter

< Matthew 16:13-19 >

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'"

We are living in a truly astonishing age. The age is drawing near before our eyes when artificial intelligence computers catch up with human intelligence and finally try to rule over man. At such a time, our Lord teaches us something truly important through the word of Matthew chapter 16. It is the question of whom we must know and believe Jesus to be in order to receive salvation.

Not long ago, an artificial intelligence Go program played Go against a man and won. People had regarded Go as the last

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domain in which man would not lose to a computer. For among all the games people play, Go was said to be the hardest to win. But that artificial intelligence played moves that a man could never calculate by common sense and finally won. At first it seemed to be losing, but in the middle it produced one strange move and finally won. Many people watched that match with their hearts in suspense.

Do you know how this artificial intelligence became so strong? A man plays one or two games of Go a day, but this artificial intelligence plays thousands of games by itself in a single day. It has all the game records that this person and that person have ever played entered into it, and it extracts, analyzes, and reorganizes them by itself. Within itself it plays against each of those people one by one, discerns all their strengths and weaknesses, finds the good data, and makes it its own. Then, when it meets an opponent, it competes with that. How fast, then, must its progress be?

Some scholars say that ten years from now there will be artificial intelligence that thinks, feels, judges, speaks, and acts exactly like a human being. Ten years will be enough, they say. A famous physicist once said that within a hundred years artificial intelligence would rule over all people. But a hundred years is too distant a story. Progress in this field is truly fast. Even ten years may be long. Perhaps such a thing could come in five years.

Artificial intelligence does not stop developing because it has lost once. In a single day it can collect everything, enter it into its data, and reorganize itself, and that is that. So man will inevitably face a world in which he is ruled by the computer he himself has made. Such an age is bound to come. Since that time is not far off, we cannot be too much at ease. But if we too keep preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit like this

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for about ten years, we will be able to say that we have preached it to the whole world to some extent.

The world that tries to unify religions

The person who developed this artificial intelligence said this: winning at Go is nothing; Go will soon surpass man. He said he was making artificial intelligence not to win at Go but to solve social and international problems. Then what is the greatest problem of this world? It is terrorism.

Terrorism arises mostly because of religion. Anger piles up in wretched lives, and such groups are formed. Then where is the way to stop that terrorism? It is to unify the religions of this world into one. But how can religions be unified? When artificial intelligence develops, people will come to ask it. Even now, with what is called big data, everything is collected and analyzed to foresee where to invest and what business will prosper. In the same way, artificial intelligence will produce an answer to this problem as well: believe your own religion yourself, but do not propagate it to others. Then the strife caused by religion will simply disappear.

So there arises what might be called a law of religious peace—a law that says you may believe your own religion but must not propagate it to others. You will surely hear such news through the media in the future. International bodies will pass such a law as artificial intelligence teaches them. When that happens, even those who fought at the risk of their lives for their religion, calling it holy war, will lose their justification. In this way artificial intelligence comes to solve the world's problems, such as religion and disease, in man's place.

In the book of Revelation, a beast rises up out of the sea.

That beast receives authority from the dragon and rules over the people. Those who do not submit to him cannot buy or sell. And the Scripture says, *"It is the number of a man: His number is 666" (Revelation 13:18)*. This means that man acts as if he were God, dominating and ruling everything concerning man. When artificial intelligence develops greatly, exactly such things will happen.

Artificial intelligence will also take over the work of developing treatments for diseases and medicines. Work that people used to research for decades, peering through microscopes, is done in an instant when entrusted to artificial intelligence. Everything changes rapidly, at a speed beyond human common sense. And so at last man becomes like a slave before the artificial intelligence he himself has made. He comes to serve it like a god, like an absolute being.

People will have to obey absolutely the few people who made it, and those people will use artificial intelligence to implant chips in people's brains, connect them to the nerves, and develop their brains. Man is now not using even a billionth of the brain God has given him. But if this brain is developed artificially, a person becomes entirely different from ordinary people. So a world in which a few people rule over all mankind comes quickly.

We are living in such an age. We are now receiving many benefits through computers, but behind them there is also a side on which we are dominated. To us, living in precisely such an age, our Lord speaks.

"Who do you say that I am?"

Jesus asked His disciples: Who do men say that I am? The

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disciples answered: Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked again: *"Who do you say that I am?"* The other disciples kept silent. At that moment Peter answered: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*.

In this age, which has come to the very verge of artificial intelligence ruling over man, what must you and I do to be saved from sin? To this very question our Lord Himself gives the answer. That answer is contained in this confession of Peter.

The faith of a religionist and true faith

This afternoon a guest came to visit. He was a person who had led a religious life for a long time—a person who had attended one denomination for decades. But he was a person who went around from this church to that church, looking around. In fact, he had heard that our Church was a heresy, and he came to investigate how we worship.

But when he actually came and saw, it seems it was quite different from what he had heard, for the people were full of life and there were many young people. Listening to him, he said that about half the churches of that denomination he knew could not support themselves because their finances fell short. He said that in some places the minister carries on his ministry with only a couple of people seated before him. And the reason they keep holding on to those positions, he said, is that if they endure to the end, they receive living expenses from the denomination when they retire.

Listening to him, many thoughts came to me, but I received him courteously and listened carefully to his story. People like

that are usually people who have come to investigate. Such a person is a religionist. He is a person who merely says, Let us live good lives. Such a person must be taught over a long, long time. In such an age, how can we receive salvation? Our Lord has spoken the answer. As Peter confessed, the Lord is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God

When Peter made this confession, Jesus praised him greatly: *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17)*. That is, the One who let him know this truth was not man but God the Father. And Jesus went on to say, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* He gave him a truly great blessing and authority.

To understand this word rightly, we must first know the word Christ. Jesus, You are the Christ. The word Christ means, in Greek, the Anointed One. It means the One who came to this earth holding three offices and carrying them out.

Then what are those three offices? In the Old Testament, who received the anointing? First, the king was anointed. Samuel poured oil on Saul's head and established him as king. Second, when the high priest was installed, oil was poured on his head. Third, the prophet was anointed. God had these three kinds of officeholders established by anointing them with oil. So to say that Jesus is the Christ means that He is the One who carries out these three offices on this earth.

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Jesus, the King of kings

First, Jesus is the King. In the book of Revelation, there was a book in the hand of the One who sat on the throne of God. There was no one among men who could take that book and open it. Then One appeared. It was the Lamb of God, who had been slain and had risen again. He is none other than Jesus. He takes the book from the Father's hand, breaks its seals, rules this world, and judges the whole world at the end.

God the Father created this universe, made man, and established every plan. And He gave His Son Jesus the authority to fulfill that plan and to judge at the last. Therefore Jesus is God and the King of kings. As the hymn we sing at Christmas says, He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Because the Father is God and the Son is also God, the Father gave all authority to the Son. He gave Him the authority to judge, the authority to save, and the authority to teach the truth. He entrusted these three offices to His Son and sent Him to this earth. Jesus was born on this earth as the King, to save His people from their sins. Matthew 1:21 says, *"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)*. Therefore Jesus is the King.

The High Priest, who took our sins upon Himself

While Jesus worked as the King, He also carried out the office of the High Priest. Jesus came to this earth in the flesh of man. And He received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. Through that baptism Jesus received from John, all the sins of mankind went over to Jesus.

Jesus took upon His own body all the sins that the devil had breathed into people.

So Jesus received baptism from John, bore those sins, was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose again from death in three days. In this way He removed all the sins of mankind once and for all. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. With this gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus completely fulfilled the office of the High Priest.

Jesus offered His own body to God the Father as the sacrificial offering: first He received baptism through John the Baptist and took over my sins and yours, and then, bearing those sins, He gave His own body to the cross. By dying and rising again, He opened wide the gate so that anyone who just believes in Him as the Savior may enter the kingdom of heaven. He is the High Priest of heaven. Without this High Priest, no one can enter the kingdom of heaven. How amazing He is!

We must know and believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Jesus is also the Prophet. The One who teaches us this truth is Jesus Himself. The whole New Testament we read is the word of Jesus. Who is God? How were we born? Where are we going? What must we believe? The One who teaches us all these things is Jesus. Therefore Jesus is the Prophet of prophets.

So if we would truly be saved from sin, we must know and believe that Jesus is the Christ—that He is the One who carries out the three offices. Jesus is our King; He is the High Priest, our Savior; and He is the Prophet, who teaches us the truth. If we know and believe in Jesus only vaguely as my Savior, it becomes a religion. The Bible is written very simply, yet it is

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the language of heaven. If we do not know its background and its spiritual meaning and believe it the way we believe a worldly religion, that faith cannot bring us to salvation. We must know it properly and believe.

The church He built on the rock

Jesus said to Peter, *"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18)*. It means: the faith with which you know Me as the Christ—knowing that I am the King of kings, the Savior, and the true Prophet—on that very faith I will build My church.

That is, through people who have this faith, God has the gospel of the water and the Spirit preached to this world, and He calls together the saved and forms the church. It is the assembly of the righteous. And Satan the devil cannot prevail against this assembly of the righteous. Even if there are some lacking and weak parts within the church, the devil cannot lord it over it. Why is that? Because God has removed all our sins. The devil exerts his power where there is sin. But our Lord has removed all our sins, and so the devil cannot use any power at all. In this way God establishes and builds up the church through those who have been saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Then Jesus said, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19)*. This word is truly important. Jesus gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven. If people accept and believe the God and the Christ that Peter preaches, they

enter the kingdom of heaven; if not, they cannot receive salvation.

What does this mean spiritually? It is a word spoken concerning the faith of the person God has established—the person who confesses the faith that the Lord is the Christ, the Son of the living God. If someone accepts what that person preaches and communes with him spiritually, he receives salvation; if he fails to do so and a problem arises, he does not receive salvation.

Today the Roman Catholic Church says that the pope holds this authority. Regarding Peter as the first pope, they consider the pope's words to be equal to the word of God. But that is wrong. This word does not mean that some particular person holds absolute authority. It means that the person who has the same faith as Peter, the same knowledge and faith as Peter—if we believe as that person knows and believes, we go to heaven.

What does this word mean, that whatever you bind on earth will be bound and whatever you loose will be loosed? It means that if the servants of God do not preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit on this earth, no one on this earth can receive the remission of sins. The keys of the kingdom of heaven, therefore, have been given to me and you, who already believe. They were not given to Peter alone. They have been given to all of us who are saved. If people accept the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach, they are loosed and enter the kingdom of heaven; if they do not accept it, they remain bound where they are.

God has given such authority to God's people. Therefore we must maintain a right relationship with God's people. If we quarrel with a saved person and become his enemy, how can we hear the gospel and receive the blessing God gives? We must not think that we can read the Bible alone and interpret it

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all by ourselves. Can you realize by yourself all the parts you do not understand as you read the Bible? Unless it is by the Holy Spirit, we cannot know its true meaning.

The mission to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and literature ministry

This word may sound like a threat, and it may sound as if a man is putting himself forward. But this is not something I have made up on my own. When I met the Lord through the Word, I had one great anxiety. God had revealed this truth to me and taught it to me, but if I preached it, it was obvious that people would call me a heretic. Yet if I kept my mouth shut, countless people would go to hell even while professing to believe in Jesus.

Looking back over the history of Christianity, apart from the early church there have been almost no people since who fully knew and believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even now there are many people who lead merely religious lives without knowing this truth. So I fell into great anguish. But God said that if I did not preach it and people perished, He would hold me responsible for it. The Apostle Paul also preached the gospel with exactly that sense of mission after he met the Lord.

When we meet the Lord, rather than a desire to lord it over others, our sense of mission and responsibility grows greater. The duty and responsibility given by God become heavier. We must preach this by faith. This is precisely why I do literature ministry. Since I cannot preach it all with my mouth, I put this truth into documents, print them, translate them, and distribute them. In that way I fulfill my responsibility before God. If

someone does not accept this gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach, he is bound; if he accepts it and believes, he is loosed and enters the kingdom of heaven.

Some people mock me, saying that I know only the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But apart from the gospel of the water and the Spirit, no one can receive the remission of sin. Only the person who knows and believes the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection—this gospel of the water and the Spirit—receives salvation.

You may ask how I know this truth. Because the Holy Spirit is in me, when I read the Scriptures I come to understand what they mean. This is not because I have some great knowledge; it comes about by the Holy Spirit. However much you search the commentaries written by the scholars of the world, you cannot find this spiritual meaning. Without the Holy Spirit, no one can know the true meaning of the Scriptures.

Some people bind up sermons with no content in them and publish them as books. But however many books they publish, if no spiritual meaning is contained in them, they give people no benefit at all. However much one reads such books, they cannot even tell him what salvation is. Only literature that contains the gospel of the water and the Spirit leads people to true salvation.

When people listen to spoken words, however well they listen, it is hard to grasp the meaning fully. But it is different when they encounter it in writing. If it is recorded accurately, the reader understands it accurately. So as we carry on literature ministry overseas, many people are saved and contact us. Pastors, missionaries, and lay believers alike say that reading these books has resolved their long-standing anguish.

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This is why literature ministry is so important.

Through me you met the Lord, and through you still others meet the Lord. Meeting is joined to meeting, and so today we are gathering our strength and preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. Through that literature people meet God and come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This chain of meetings must keep going on.

Sadly, many churches in our country are collapsing. There are not a few churches that have chapel buildings but are emptying inside, on the verge of closing their doors. Yet there are those who hold on to their positions to the end because of the living expenses they will receive when they retire. Long ago I said that Christianity in our country would collapse within twenty or thirty years, and it is actually happening that way. But how fortunate we are! For we know and believe who the Christ is, and what Jesus came to this earth and did for us.

The work of saving us cannot be accomplished by anyone but the High Priest of heaven. If He were not the High Priest, we could not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus offered His own body as a sacrificial offering before God the Father: He first received baptism through John the Baptist, taking over my sins and yours, and bearing those sins He sacrificed His own body on the cross. And He died and rose again, opening the gate so that anyone who just believes in Him as the Savior may enter the kingdom of heaven. He is the One who carried out the role of the High Priest of heaven. How amazing He is!

Let us have the same faith as Peter

Therefore, if we would receive salvation, we must have the same knowledge and faith as Peter. If we have such faith, we

have nothing to fear even if artificial intelligence develops ever so much and rules over man. We have only to carry out our work calmly on this earth and, when the time comes, go before God.

This earth will someday become a world hard for people to live in. A time will come that is truly hard to endure, with natural disasters and the plagues God sends down. In the future countless occupations will disappear from this earth, and the day will come when people are ruled by computers. We must know how to use and employ such things; we must not follow them blindly and become their slaves. Therefore, let every one of you, without exception, believe in Jesus as the Christ. Jesus is the King of kings, the High Priest who saved me, and the Prophet who taught us this truth.

If our Lord did not teach us through this Scripture, how could we know this truth? However much we pore over the commentaries written by the scholars of the world, we cannot know it. Only by the Holy Spirit do we come to realize this truth.

What I want to tell you is this. Let us all believe as Peter did. Jesus, You are the Christ, and You are the Son of the living God. Though You are the Son of God, You came to this earth in the flesh of man, and as the King, to save us, Your people, from sin, You did the work of the High Priest and the work of the Prophet. And so You saved us. Let us too, like Peter, know this and believe it well.

Peter, who believed like that, was saved, and today you and I also receive salvation when we believe like that. Let us not be unbelievers but believers who believe well. Let not even one of us hold a different faith or a different thought. Our actions may differ a little, but our faith must be one and the same. That is how we go to the kingdom of heaven. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The life of faith is not something we do alone

< Matthew 16:13-20 >

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ."

What we want to meditate on together in this Wednesday evening prayer meeting is the passage we have just read.

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Peter's confession of faith

Our beloved Jesus asked His disciples, *"Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (Matthew 16:13)*. Here the term Son of Man refers to Jesus Himself, who came to this earth as the Son of Man. Jesus asked this, referring to Himself. Then the disciples answered Him, *"Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14)*. Some said John the Baptist—each said something different.

Then Jesus asked again, *"Who do you say that I am?"* At that, Simon Peter answered, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. Peter made his confession of faith properly like this, and so he was praised by Jesus. Through this word today, we want to look together at how we should live the life of faith and what this passage is telling us.

Peter made the confession of faith rightly in his life of faith. The Lord is the Christ, the Son of the living God. That the Lord is the Christ means that the Lord is the King of kings and God, who created this universe. The Lord is also the One who carries out the role of the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven and does the work of the Prophet. And He is our Savior. Yet this Savior is, to God the Father, the Son. Peter confessed like this, and it was all a right confession. So he was praised by Jesus.

Jesus said, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17)*. It means that God taught this to him. And hearing Peter's confession, the Lord went on to say, *"You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18)*.

You are Peter—that is, a firm rock. You are a man whose faith is truly solid and unshakable; on your faith I will build

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My church, My kingdom; I will work through you. That is what the Lord was saying.

And He said that the power of Hades would not prevail against it. Even death cannot wipe out the work this church seeks to do; it cannot wipe out our faith, and it cannot wipe out our salvation. It cannot wipe out the faith Peter had, or the blessing Peter would receive, or the faith of those who have the same faith as Peter. Even death cannot overcome it—that is what He told us.

"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven"

And the Lord said, *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19)*. This word means that through the person who has the faith that confesses, like Peter, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* the Lord will carry on His work of salvation.

When Peter preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit and delivers the Word, the person who accepts that word receives salvation. The person who does not accept the word Peter preaches does not receive salvation. That is why the Lord said, I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

And the Lord spoke an important word: whatever you bind on earth will be bound, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed. This is a truly important word. Among us there are many who think that the life of faith is something they can live in their own way. There are those who think that after being saved, the life of faith is something I manage on my own, in my own way—and I suppose there are those who actually do

so.

But the Lord said: whatever you bind on earth will be bound; if you tie a knot, it is tied, and if you loose it, it is loosed. That is, He told Peter, I will work according to your will. It is the same with salvation. When a person of faith—a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells—testifies to the Word, the person who is in harmony with that word and believes in union with it receives salvation. On the other hand, if someone merely transmits what Peter knows without believing it in his own heart, then even if a hearer says he believes it, that salvation does not come.

The life of faith is not something we live alone

What I want to say today is this. I suppose you all know this much already and believe it. Through this Peter, the Lord said, Whatever you desire to do, I will bring it about.

Of course, if it were something that goes against God's will or something wrong, He would not let it be done; but the word means: whenever you desire to bind, I will let it be bound, and when you desire to loose, I will let it be loosed—I will work through you. The work the Lord does, He said He would do through this Peter. There were many other disciples on this earth as well, but the Lord spoke looking at the foremost among the disciples.

God works through His servants

We too are living the life of faith now. The word means that when the church, the servants of God, and the leader who

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guides this flock are led and moved by God and seek to do some work according to God's will, God brings it about. Just as God worked through Peter, He does the same in this age as well. Of course, as you know, every person is weak and has weak points.

But when we seek to do something and the church seeks to do something, you will experience God helping it. When we want to do this part in this way, we experience God helping that part. Why? Because He said, Whatever you bind on earth, I will let it be bound, and whatever you loose, I will loose it. That is, the Lord will work through you.

To put it simply, it means that God will also bless through you. He will not curse—since He told us not to curse if we can help it—but at any rate, God says He will work through His servants. Such is God's will. So when we desire to do some work, God surely opens the way. Do you not sense such things? Have you not experienced them? Could this have happened by mere chance? Think about it once.

For example, when we are working and decide that we should raise up overseas coworkers, it is not I who raise up those coworkers; they themselves receive the books, read and believe them, and rise up saying they will do the work themselves. Coworkers rise up like that in every part of the world. God gives His servant a certain heart, gives him a will, lets him set a direction, and makes him go in that direction. And when God's servants set their hearts and move in that direction, God is with that work, brings it to completion, and gives power and blessing and works.

Therefore, if we would live the life of faith properly, we must not do it with our own will or our own intentions alone. The life of faith does not work that way. For we ourselves are weak, like those whose resolutions last only three days, and we

keep stumbling. We must see in which direction God now desires to work through His servants, believe it, follow it, and be united with it. That is the true life of faith.

Unite your heart with the direction the church is heading

This is not telling you to submit to me. God said to Peter, Whatever you bind on earth I will let be bound, and whatever you loose I will let be loosed. This word applies just the same to us within our Church in this age. God desires us to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit through the works for the gospel, and if we set our hearts to do so, that way opens. Why is that? Because God is with us.

You may try to live the life of faith diligently in your own way. But try as you may, it ends up as a three-day resolution. Before even a week passes, your will and your resolve all collapse. Therefore, see in which direction the church is now moving, in which direction it is praying; unite with it in prayer in that direction, stand on that side by faith, and act. Then the Lord goes before us, helps that work, and accomplishes it.

The Lord works together with His servants. Uniting your heart with God's servants and doing God's work—that is living the life of faith properly. Do you understand what this means? The life of faith is not something you live alone. It is never achieved by being diligent all on your own. You must see in which direction the church is now going. For example, if a patent must be obtained for a work, then it must be obtained; if some product must be made, then it must be made.

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Peter's confession is our very faith

We all live the life of faith together, but why did God speak that way to Peter? Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* This confession of Peter is exactly the same as the faith I now believe. He is God, yet to God the Father He is the Son; He is the King and the Creator, who made the universe and all things. He is God's High Priest. He is the One who saved us by His own sacrifice, that is, by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and who through that salvation sends us into the kingdom of heaven. We knew nothing at all, and He taught this to us. The roles of King, High Priest, and Prophet—the Lord came to this earth and fulfilled them all. If we believe that fact, the faith we now believe with is precisely that faith.

When we believe like that, the Lord works. He said, Whatever you bind on earth, I also bind. This word can also be interpreted this way: the person who becomes an enemy of God's servant becomes an enemy of God. It is truly simple. The person who is at peace and united with God's servant is united with God as well. Even reasoning it out logically, it is exactly so. How could this be an absurd story? It is a fact.

You live the life of faith in your own way, but if you are not careful, you can end up on the wrong track. For example, we brought in a certain brother to serve the Lord with work such as the homepage or design, but there are cases where someone does not want to do it properly. If he will not do it, what shall we do? We do it through someone else. So even now, in our lack, we are preparing that work together with other brothers and sisters. We still have much to learn.

Let me give you an example. Suppose that brother is now living a religious life in his own way—attending church, giving

offerings, tithing, giving thanksgiving offerings. Is that, then, a true life of faith? I am teaching you plainly. That is doing it alone. When God, through His servant, says, I have given you such gifts and talents, and I want you to serve the Lord in this way through you—if he does not do it, he is going against God's will. That is not the life of faith.

Leaving that brother's case aside, it is the same with me and with you, who are living among us now. If I too am not united with the Lord, I am not living the life of faith. If I do not do what pleases the Lord, it is all useless. What is a servant of the Lord? A servant of the Lord is, literally, a servant. A servant does as his master directs. There is no other lofty meaning. Lording it over God's servants is not being a servant. How could a servant lord it over others?

Yet among servants there are also servants God has set up first. Such a servant knows the Lord's will well, receives His commands and passes them on, and manages the work properly. That is the meaning it has—nothing else. Then, are you perhaps living your life of faith only in your own way? If your attitude is, He wants to use me, so I do it grudgingly—then you must make your heart one with his.

That whatever you bind on earth is bound is the same as tying a cord. If you tie the cord, I will let it be tied; and if you loose it, the Lord joins His will to ours. The life of faith is not something dragged along by force. That is not the life of faith. You must unite your heart, thinking, Ah, this is how it should be done. When the church moves in some direction, believe, 'Ah, through this He intends to serve the gospel of God,' and run together with the same heart and the same faith—that is the life of faith.

We must know the life of faith properly. If you know the meaning of this passage today, you can live the life of faith

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properly. But if you do not know the meaning of the passage, merely living the life of faith passively does not make it the life of faith. Everyone, though you may be passive at first, later you become active and do it in union together. For God desires to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world through us.

Since God desires it so, is that not why we are now doing the calyx business for the gospel? We must not do it half-heartedly; we must ask, seek, and knock, moving forward actively. This is truly important. Having lived the life of faith, I know it is so.

For example, suppose land is now needed for the work of the gospel. Since we should secure the needed land in advance, we pray. Then God gives us such a heart. You may ask what is so special about being given such a heart, but it is different from your own individual heart. The heart God gives as we discern God's will is different from the heart of each of us on our own. The heart of one who lives wholly for the Lord and the heart of one who merely follows along passively are completely different—as different as the heart of an owner and the heart of an employee.

We simply pray to God to give us land. To get land that way and clear it takes truly much labor and time. So there are times when we pray, wishing in our hearts that He would give us land we could use more easily. And God sometimes readily gives exactly such land. Since you have not done it yourselves, it may not feel real to you, but sometimes we obtain land as if we had received it for nothing.

So when we set our hearts and exert our wills for the Lord, the Lord does it for us. If we desire to preach the gospel to the whole world, He says He will make it so. If you only set your hearts and follow My will, I will accomplish it—that is this word.

But if we do not set our hearts and just let things drift, thinking God will take care of everything, that is not the heart of a servant. We must discern what the Lord would be pleased with in the present situation. There is a proverb that even an ox needs a bank to rub against. Must there not be something to lean on? Even if God intends to give a blessing, must there not be something prepared for Him to bless upon? Even in business for the gospel, only when we have done something and then pray does God bless it, make it prosper, and give it to us.

If we only pray and sit still, saying, Whatever will be will be, God will give according to His will, nothing comes about. That is not even faith. Faith moves. If we truly believe, we live our lives according to that faith.

Several coworkers have now been raised up among us. But in fact, at first there were not so many coworkers. Those who properly carried out our work were no more than three or four. Yet these days they roll up their sleeves and come forward, saying they will do the work themselves. Because we desire that many overseas coworkers rise up, that workers of the gospel rise up all over the world and preach the gospel, God works. That is why it happens.

Therefore, everyone, if you would live the life of faith properly, you must know in which direction the church is now going, believe in that part, unite with it in heart, and work as if it were your own affair. Then God is with you, works, and blesses. So it is not achieved by merely working hard at anything whatever. What matters is with what will God's servant is moving and in which direction. That is how we must live the life of faith. You all know the words of today's passage literally, but you must know what they are saying.

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Why God spoke to Peter

Why did God speak that way to Peter? There was John, there was Mark, and there were all the other disciples. But in those days of the early church, Jesus set Peter up as the foremost among these disciples. So He spoke that way to Peter, and Peter also made the confession of faith. The other disciples stayed silent, only repeating what they had picked up—people say You are John the Baptist, or Jeremiah—and then keeping still.

But when He asked, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter answered plainly, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* The other disciples kept silent. So the Lord said to Peter, Whatever you bind on earth, I will let it be bound just so, and I will work through you. If with your will you desire to follow My will, I will give you power, go before you, and help you. That is what the Lord's word means. Is it not so?

The blessing received by the one who honors God's servant

It does not matter if you look down on me personally. If you look down on me because I have human shortcomings, that is all right. But when I am doing God's work, if someone despises me, saying, Are you the only servant of God—am I not also God's servant?—then he is actually binding himself. He who becomes my enemy is God's enemy as well. If I am following God's will, then whoever becomes my enemy on this earth becomes God's enemy too. If he is at peace with me, he is at peace with God. Whoever becomes your enemy is God's enemy as well; it is all the same. It applies equally from the top

to the bottom.

Among people there are those who, when anger boils up after long endurance, pour out abuse and curses on others. But we see that the one who pours out curses like that is rather the one who comes to ruin. The one who curses, hoping another will fall sick and be ruined, actually receives the curse himself. Then who holds such authority? God's servants hold it. But we do not wield that authority carelessly.

Then could I exercise that authority one-sidedly? Never. You are God's temple, so when I regard you as precious, as God's people, I receive such blessing. And when you serve God preciously and live in good union with the Lord's will, if someone despises that and mocks you, God mocks that person and surely treads him down. That is how it goes.

So this is what the life of faith is like. If the people of the world would be saved, they must be united with us. Otherwise not a single person can be saved. They must read our books and be united with that truth, or be united with us. He said that God will curse those who curse us and bless those who bless us. This is God's will. Even if someone in your own family sets himself sharply against the church, in truth you must bear with him long and patiently.

Rather than cursing, since they act so because they do not know, we must bear with them long, and pray that God will save them and let them come to know. And so that they may be saved, those who were saved first must lead them with faith. Without this it can never happen. Apart from being united in heart with you, they have no way to be saved. If they refuse to the end to be united, they end up going to hell. Not only do they go to hell, but if they stand against us on this earth, they receive in themselves the result of that opposition. This is what the life of faith is.

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Therefore, the authority of those who serve God is truly great. But we do not wield that authority, and we do not curse. Each person simply receives according to what he does. It is not that we make it so from our side; it comes about of itself. Jesus, before God the Father, is the Son, yet He is God, who created this universe and all things.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which He took our sins upon Himself

To save us, He obeyed the Father's will, took on flesh, and came to this earth as a man. And Jesus took our sins upon His own body by receiving baptism from John, was nailed to the cross and died, and rose again in three days, becoming our Savior. He is God; and to bring us into the kingdom of heaven, He, as the High Priest, took all the sins of His people upon His own body, died in our place, and rose again, saving us from sin. He teaches us all the truth. In today's passage as well, the Lord is carrying out the role of the Prophet for us.

This is the life of faith. The Lord has given us such authority and blessing. A prophet is one who teaches everything first. So we must know the life of faith properly and live it, and we must engrave this on our hearts once more. The life of faith is not something we live alone. It is not a matter of striving hard by ourselves. We must do what we are directed to do, do it in union, and join our hearts together. Living the life of faith is not living it detached and alone. That is exactly what this word says. May God give you the wisdom to understand this word properly, give you faith, and bless you to live by that faith and receive blessing.

Do you understand these words? Living the life of faith

properly means living it that way. Why must we unite our hearts with God's servants? Because God is not visible to your eyes. Because you cannot serve the invisible God as if He were visible. That is why God has set up His servants on this earth and works through them. As we unite our hearts with God's servants and serve the Lord, we are united with God as well, our relationship with Him is good, and we serve Him well.

Alone, we cannot live the life of faith rightly. A believer must unite his heart with God's servants and serve the Lord by faith. The Lord taught us this part, and I believe it so. At that time the Lord told them not to tell people that He was the Christ, but the Lord is the Christ. He is the King of kings, the true God, the true Savior, the One who removed our sins with the water and the blood. He sacrificed His own body, took our sins upon His own body, gave His body over to the cross and died, and rose again, saving me and you. It says, *"He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21)*. He is God, and as our Savior He saved us from sin with His own body—who else has ever done that for you? Who teaches us this fact? The Scriptures teach us. Whose word are the Scriptures? Are they not the word of God? We must acknowledge them as such.

Now the churches across the country are preaching the gospel with all their strength like this. These days a truly great number of books are going out every week. Because God gives us the heart, books containing the gospel of the water and the Spirit are spreading out into the world like this.

I am thinking of sending out a million books this year. Next year I think of sending out about ten million. When we set our hearts like this, it comes about. God provides the material means as well and works that way. It is not achieved by hard work alone; we must set our hearts so. First of all, I myself must set my heart so. I desire to raise up, as an urgent first step,

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about a thousand coworkers around the world. And later I desire to raise up a hundred thousand, a million, ten million servants of God. Such is the heart I have.

Long ago I set my heart to preach this gospel to the whole world. As soon as I met the Lord, I set my heart to preach this gospel to the whole world and prayed. Afterward, as circumstances did not allow, I simply kept it in my heart, prayed, and went on living by faith. But when God's time came, He accomplished it all. It is not merely a matter of having many people. Are we not now preaching it to the whole world through e-books, paper books, and audiobooks? God works together with His servants like this. He will continue to do so. We will raise up the business for the gospel on a truly great scale. Amen.

The work we are doing now is not done with an attitude of 'whether it works or not, no matter.' We are preparing like this because we intend to do it on a great scale. When we prepare, set our hearts by faith, and pray, it surely comes about.

We give thanks before God. When we count the blessings we have received, they are truly great; and when we think of what God will do from now on, that too is truly great. If we set our hearts well and live by faith, though we are lacking, the Lord is with us and works. We give thanks. Believing so, we give thanks. Now I will close the message, and after we pray and sing praise together, we will finish. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The faith that is mindful of the things of God and bears its own cross

< Matthew 16:21-28 >

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.'"

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The way He had to walk for our salvation

After Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus began for the first time to teach His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem, suffer many things, be killed, and rise again on the third day. The fact that Jesus is the Christ and His suffering, death, and resurrection cannot be separated from each other. The Christ is not a king who only receives human respect but the Savior, who gives Himself to save sinners.

Jesus knew in advance what would happen to Him. He knew that what awaited Him in Jerusalem was not welcome and peace but rejection, suffering, and death. Yet He did not avoid that path. Jesus' death was not a failure that came suddenly through human schemes; it was the work of atonement accomplished within God's will to save sinners.

The text says that after suffering and dying, Jesus must rise again on the third day. The cross must be seen together with the resurrection. Jesus is not One who was defeated by death; He is the One who paid the wages of sin by His death and shattered the power of death by His resurrection. The gospel, therefore, does not end as a sad story of sacrifice; it becomes the news of victory that gives the remission of sin and new life.

But to know why Jesus' cross becomes our salvation, we must know how He took our sins upon Himself before He was nailed to the cross. If the sinless Jesus had died without taking on any sin, His death could not have been the judgment of our sins. Jesus first took all the sins of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist.

The work of God, completed by the water and the blood

In the sin offerings of the Old Testament, the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins onto it. The year's sins of the whole people of Israel were transferred when the high priest laid his hands on the sacrificial goat. The offering that received the sins shed its blood and died, bearing the price of those sins. Through this system God showed in advance the salvation Jesus Christ would accomplish.

In the New Testament era, John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was not merely a ceremony to show humility or an event marking the beginning of His public ministry. Through this baptism Jesus took over the sins of all the people of the world once and for all. This is what God did to save sinners righteously.

Having taken on the sins, Jesus went up to the cross and died shedding His blood. The suffering Jesus received on the cross was not a punishment for any sin of His own; He received in our place the judgment that should have fallen on us. The Lord paid the wages of all the sins of mankind with His own life and rose again on the third day. Thus, for the person who believes, no price of sin remains to be paid.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit testifies to this work of God. The water is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, and the blood is the judgment of sin He received on the cross. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and that this salvation was accomplished perfectly by God's will and power. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection form one complete salvation.

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To be mindful of the things of God is first to believe this salvation God has accomplished for us. It is to lay down the thought of solving one's own sins by oneself and to accept the fact that Jesus took on all sins and was judged. If we try to wash away our sins daily with our own works and prayers of repentance, we end up not fully believing the salvation Jesus accomplished once and for all. The remission of sin is received not by our labor but by believing in the righteousness the Lord has completed.

The thoughts of man hidden inside a good intention

When Peter heard Jesus' words, he took hold of the Lord and said, *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* From a human point of view, Peter's words seem to contain love and loyalty. When the teacher he revered said He would suffer and die, trying to stop Him was a natural reaction.

But Jesus rebuked Peter very sternly: *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* It does not mean that Peter himself was Satan, but that Satan was using his human thoughts to try to block Jesus' work of salvation. If Jesus did not go the way of the cross, the sins of mankind could not be judged and no one could be saved. Peter's good-looking words were, in their result, words that stood in the way of the work of God.

The thoughts of man do not always appear in evil and rough forms. Sometimes they speak of love and consideration, reasonableness and safety, while going against the will of God. They say, If we preach the gospel we may be misunderstood, so let us tone down the content a little; or, The Lord's work brings labor and sacrifice, so let us do it after our

circumstances improve. It looks wise humanly, but if souls fail to hear the gospel because of such thinking, it produces a result opposed to the work of God.

A little earlier Peter had been praised for confessing Jesus as the Christ. But immediately afterward he was rebuked for being mindful of the things of men. Even a person who has made a right confession of faith can put his own thoughts forward at any time. Realizing the truth once does not automatically make all our thoughts spiritual. A believer must continually hold his thoughts up to the Word and discern what the work of God is.

The Lord said to Peter, *"Get behind Me."* The disciple's place is not the place of determining the way ahead of the Lord but the place of following His word from behind Him. We must not propose to the Lord a path that seems more comfortable and safer to us; we must believe that the way the Lord goes is right and follow after Him.

The things of God and the things of men

Jesus said that Peter was mindful not of the things of God but of the things of men. The things of men here is not a word condemning as evil all the occupations and daily life by which people make their living. Believers too must care for their families, work at their jobs, and carry out their social responsibilities. The problem lies in placing only the comfort and benefit of one's own flesh at the center of every judgment.

The heart that is mindful of the things of men first calculates its own safety, reputation, and property. It regards not suffering loss as more important than the gospel being preached, and seeks its own comfort before the salvation of

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souls. Even work undertaken in the church can turn into the things of men if it is for one's own recognition and position.

The work of God is the work of saving sinners. That Jesus came to this earth, took on sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and was judged on the cross is the work of God. And delivering this complete salvation to the world so that people receive the remission of sins is also the work of God.

Believers must not think that only preaching or going abroad as a missionary is the work of God. Praying so that the gospel can be preached, making and distributing literature, caring for the needs of the church, helping evangelists, and letting weak souls hear the Word—all these labors are included in the work of God. Though the form entrusted to each person differs, if the aim lies in the salvation of souls and the preaching of the gospel, it is participation in the Lord's work.

Doing the work of God requires time, material things, and the labor of the heart. If we undertake nothing, the flesh may be comfortable. But if we do not preach the gospel, the souls under sin get no opportunity to hear the truth. If a saved believer lives only for his own comfort, he fails to use the life and the gifts God has given him for their most precious purpose.

We do not obtain the remission of sins by doing the work of God. Because we have already received the remission of sins by believing in the water and the blood of Jesus, we do God's work out of gratitude. This order must be clear. If we make the fact that we have worked much the ground of our salvation, self-righteousness arises, and when the work is hard, we complain. But when we remember the salvation received freely, even our small labor becomes thanksgiving in response to the Lord's grace.

The true meaning of denying oneself

Jesus told the person who would come after Him to deny himself. Self-denial does not mean hating one's own person or erasing all feeling and individuality. It means, when the word of God and my thoughts collide, not holding on to my own judgment as absolute but acknowledging that the Lord's word is right.

A person must deny his own strong points. If he boasts of his knowledge and experience, his talents and piety, and thinks himself better than others, it is hard for him to follow the Lord's leading. The person whose own righteousness is strong cannot lay down his own merit even when he hears the gospel that Jesus removed all sins. When we are saved, we must first acknowledge that we cannot solve our sins with our own righteousness and accept the righteousness of God.

But self-denial is not only laying down one's strong points. We must also deny our own inadequacy and weakness. Some people conclude that because they are lacking and have many failures, the Lord cannot use them. It looks like humility, but this too can be a thought that exalts one's own judgment above the word of God. If the Lord has saved us and says He will use us, we must believe in the Lord's power rather than in our own lack.

If we look at our own strength we become proud, and if we look only at our own weakness we become discouraged. Faith turns our eyes from ourselves to Jesus. My merits did not complete salvation, and my deficiencies cannot nullify the Lord's salvation. The fact that Jesus completed salvation through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection does not change according to our feelings and circumstances.

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Believers must deny themselves repeatedly in their lives. When my thoughts feel more right than the Word, when I want to avoid the work of the gospel for the comfort of the flesh, when I want to lay down the work entrusted to me because of my inadequacy, I must look to the Lord. Acknowledging, “This is how I feel, but the Lord’s word is right,” and taking one step forward by faith—that is self-denial.

The way of bearing one’s own cross and following

Jesus said not only to deny oneself but to take up one’s own cross and follow Him. One’s own cross is not a word that unconditionally calls every disease or family hardship a spiritual cross. It refers to the responsibility and sacrifice we come to bear because we follow the Lord and the gospel—the portion of faith God has entrusted to each person.

Jesus’ cross was the atoning cross that completed our salvation. No one can bear an atoning cross like Jesus’. Our cross is that a person who has already been saved lays down his own greed and comfort to follow the Lord’s will and bears the labor of the gospel. Jesus’ cross is the cause of salvation, and our cross is the fruit of a life that follows in gratitude for that salvation.

Each person’s cross can differ. One person takes on the work of preaching the gospel, another serves in literature and translation, another helps missions with material things and prayer. And another bears the labor of embracing weak souls and waiting for them. There is no need to compare our cross with another’s. What matters is bearing by faith the work the Lord has entrusted to us.

To bear the cross does not mean to suffer grudgingly with a

sorrowful face. It is to look beyond the labor to the souls who will hear the gospel and to the fruit of the kingdom of God. If we think only in fleshly terms, even a small task feels heavy and unfair. But if we look at the same work as the work of God, hope arises that through that labor someone may receive the remission of sins.

There are hardships on the way of following the Lord, but the Lord does not leave us alone. The Holy Spirit holds our hearts with the Word, and within the church He lets believers unite and share the load. Bearing one's own cross does not mean solving every problem alone. It is walking the entrusted way by faith together with the church, the body of the Lord.

Losing one's life and finding it

Jesus said that whoever desires to save his own life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for the Lord will find it. This does not mean that a person buys the remission of sin with acts of sacrifice or martyrdom. The remission of sin is received only by believing in the gospel Jesus accomplished. This word asks what a saved person will use his life for.

The person who tries to save only his own life piles up all his time, ability, and possessions for his own flesh. To obtain a safer and more comfortable life, he compromises the truth and puts off the calling of the gospel. Outwardly he seems to have kept much, but from the eternal viewpoint he loses the true purpose of the life God has given.

Conversely, losing one's life for the Lord does not mean treating one's life carelessly. It means acknowledging that the owner of one's life is not oneself but the Lord, and using the rest of one's days for the gospel and for souls. When a person

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who used to live only for himself begins to think of the Lord's will, the good of the church, and the salvation of other souls, he discovers the true value of life.

Jesus said that it profits a man nothing if he gains the whole world and loses his own life. Even if he gains all the wealth, honor, and power of the world, if his soul perishes in sin, nothing can be called success. Conversely, even if a person is not greatly visible in the world, the life of one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, obtains eternal life, and lives for that gospel is the most valuable before God.

We cannot buy life back at any price. Money cannot stop death, and honor cannot escape the judgment of sin. Therefore, while we live, we must believe in the eternal life Jesus Christ has given and live for the imperishable work of the kingdom of God. This is not a life that abandons the responsibilities of this world; it is a life that sets everything of this world rightly under an eternal purpose.

Looking to the Lord, who rewards each according to his works

Jesus said that He would come in the glory of His Father with His angels and then reward each person according to what he has done. The Lord's first coming was a humble coming to save sinners, but when He comes again, He comes in the glory of the King and the Judge. Everyone will stand before the Lord and be judged concerning his faith and his life.

We must not understand this word to mean that we are saved by works. A sinner becomes righteous only by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But faith is not separated from life. The person who has truly believed the

gospel follows the Lord in gratitude for that grace, and the person who does not believe follows his own thoughts and his own righteousness to the end. Each person's deeds reveal what his heart believed and served.

God does not forget even the small labor offered for the gospel. He remembers the prayers and service that received no recognition from people, the time spent to preach the gospel to one soul, and the material things and sacrifices offered for the church and for missions. We do not work competitively to win a reward; we serve because the Lord's grace is precious to us. But the righteous Lord knows each person's faithfulness exactly and repays it.

Conversely, if someone holds religious office and outward form and yet stands against the gospel and delivers the teachings of men, those deeds also are exposed before the Lord. The Lord looks not at the outward appearance but at the heart and the faith. Therefore we must throw away faith that is for show before people, believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished, and live honestly before the Lord.

A disciple of Jesus is not an irresponsible person who never thinks of the affairs of men. He is a person who cares faithfully for his daily life and his family while placing the center of his whole life in the kingdom of God. He does not regard his occupation, talents, and possessions as being only for himself but uses them as instruments for serving the gospel. He rejoices when the work of God prospers and counts the salvation of souls more precious than his own gain.

When Peter heard this word, he tried to stop the Lord with the thoughts of man, but later he turned and became an apostle who preached the gospel and served the Lord's sheep. One mistake does not end the way of a disciple. We have only to accept the rebuke of the Word, turn from our own thoughts,

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and follow behind the Lord again.

Times keep coming to us as well when we must choose between the things of men and the things of God. At such times we must deny both our strength and our weakness and believe that the Lord is right. On the faith that Jesus saved us perfectly through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection, we must bear our own cross. The person who looks to the day the Lord comes again and uses the rest of his life for the gospel and for souls is the person who has truly found his life. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

Deny yourself and follow the Lord with the mind of the Spirit

< Matthew 16:21-24 >

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

"Who do you say that I am?"

Our Lord, knowing that the time had now come for Him to go up to Jerusalem, taught His disciples for the first time what He would undergo there. Look at verse 21. The Lord said, I will now go up to Jerusalem. He said that when He went up there, He would be seized by the elders and chief priests and scribes of Israel, suffer many things, and be killed. But He said that He would rise again on the third day. The Lord told them

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plainly like this of the death of the cross He would suffer and of His resurrection in three days.

There was a reason the Lord could speak this word to His disciples. Just before, when the Lord asked, *"Who do you say that I am?"* Peter confessed, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. Then the Lord praised him, saying, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven."* And He said that He would build His church on this rock.

Because the disciples' faith had grown to some degree like this, the Lord could now speak of going up to Jerusalem, dying on the cross, and rising from death. Peter had made that confession of faith, and the other disciples had also come to have faith enough to make such a confession. The Lord thought like this: Now the time has come. I have already received baptism from John and taken on all the sins of the world. It is already the third year since I was baptized. What remains for Me now is to be killed on the cross and to rise again from death. This was the last step in fulfilling the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That is why the Lord could speak this word.

But as soon as Peter heard this word, he stepped forward. Peter seems to have been a truly hot-tempered man. When the Lord said that He would go up to Jerusalem and be seized and killed by the religious leaders and the political leaders, Peter, the moment the words ended, took hold of the Lord and tried to stop Him: *"Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"* Such a thing will never happen. Peter earnestly tried to dissuade Him like this.

From Peter's standpoint, this was a natural reaction. Peter was the man who had already confessed to the Lord, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* He believed that the One before his eyes was God and the Son of God, the High Priest of

heaven who removes the sins of mankind, the Prophet, and the Savior who saves him. When his own teacher and his own God said that He would be seized and killed, how could Peter stay still? At the word that the absolute One and Shepherd whom he loved, revered, and relied on would be killed, was it not entirely natural for Peter to be alarmed and try to stop Him?

But the Lord's response was unexpected. Ordinarily it was a situation deserving the praise, You are truly My true disciple. Instead, a stern rebuke fell. The Lord turned and said to Peter, *"Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."* The Lord rebuked him like this, saying, You may say such things because you cherish and love Me, but do you know how wrong those words are?

Looking at it calmly, Peter too, as a disciple and as a sheep, said what he might naturally say to his shepherd. But the Lord also said what He surely had to say: Get behind Me, Satan. Everyone, is it not so? Jesus had received all the sins of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John—if He were not then nailed to the cross to die and did not rise from death, would your salvation and mine be accomplished? It would not. This was something that had to happen in reality. It is not theory. It is not virtual reality inside a computer. The Lord had to actually receive baptism from John and take on our sins, actually shed His blood and die on the cross, and actually rise again from death. Therefore the Lord's words are all right.

A life that discerns the things of God and the things of men

God lets us hear these things, shows them to us, and speaks

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to us. Why does He tell us such things? Because things like this happen often while we live on this earth. There are times when we think we are doing well and yet are mindful only of the things of men. There are times when we fail to think of the things of God. So we must distinguish these two well. We must discern well and live by faith. I believe the Lord spoke this word to teach us precisely this.

It is actually so. As we meet the Lord and go on living the life of faith, such things often come upon us. When we do some work, it is clear that it is for people and for our family, but it is hard to discern whether it is only for our flesh or whether it is, one step further, a preparation for doing the work of God. We struggle much in these areas. There are truly many times when we struggle because we cannot discern the things of God and the things of men. There are also many times when we make mistakes.

When we retrace the way we have come, we also learn how we should act in the future. We used to do the work of unclogging sewer pipes. We made our living doing that rough manual work, and with what we earned from it we printed booklets and preached the gospel in this country. Then we turned to waterproofing work, and while doing waterproofing we began overseas missions.

In the old days, when brothers finished the six-month course at the mission school, we sent them out to church-planting sites. At that time we bought and sent with them the one thing they would need first: a machine for unclogging sewer pipes. After getting them a chapel, we bought each of them one of those machines and charged them like this: You are going down to preach the gospel, and you have no idea how hard it is to win even one person. So do not starve; work with this machine, make your living, and preach the gospel. That is

how we bought those machines and sent them with them.

But do you think we did such work merely to make a living? Of course, making a living was part of it. But that was not all. We did this work in order to do overseas missions and to prepare the material means to preach the gospel. Developing step by step like that, we have come to this day.

Seen this way, some people may think: Must they really pile up work like that until even the place for worship grows cramped? These days it is a world where, if you press a few buttons with your finger, anything is delivered right away. Meals and cleaning are all handled easily. One could live comfortably like that—why live doing such hard and dangerous work? But this question is exactly the same as the words that passed just now between Jesus and Peter. Why must this work be done the hard way? Why must these risks be taken?

The reason is this. The Lord took on human flesh and came to this earth for me and you. And He took our sins upon Himself by receiving baptism from John. As if that were not enough, He is now going up to Jerusalem to be nailed to the cross and die. For whom is all this? It is for mankind, and for me and you today. How could you and I receive the remission of sins? Without this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we could only have gone to hell. The Lord fulfilled this gospel of the water and the Spirit for our salvation, to give us eternal life, and to establish the kingdom of God and have us live there forever.

Just as the Lord did so, in the work we do in the church today there is nothing trivial. There is no work that may be despised. It is all precious work. From cooking in the kitchen to tending the fire, farming, handling tax matters, taking charge of administration, publicizing our products, and making

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products in the workshop—there is not one thing that is not important. It is all the work of God.

Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me

Yet as we work, we come to think about whether a task is for man or for God. Since we are the righteous, we must first care for people too. We must care for one another. And then we must also care for the work of God. To preach the gospel there must be material means, and for that we too must make our living and attain stability. There is nothing wrong in any of this. Only, problems can arise in our attitude, heart, and thinking as we work. If I think only of my own eating and living well, that is truly wrong. Thinking nothing of the preaching of the gospel and caring only for people—only for oneself—is wrong. We must work for all three: for all the people of the world, for our family of faith, and for yourselves as well.

Therefore our Lord said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."* He tells us to deny ourselves. While serving God, caring for the people of the world, doing the work of God, and caring for ourselves, we must deny only the fleshly thoughts, the thoughts that care for ourselves alone. Even if such a thought rises, we must deny it, saying it is not right. Not every thought that rises within us is right. Everyone, are all the thoughts that rise in your heart in a day right? I know they are not. It is so with me and with you as well. Therefore we must deny the many thoughts that rise up within us and do the work of God.

And He told us to follow Him. He said, *"Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew*

16:24). To follow does not mean just to walk along slowly. It means we must follow hard after Him, diligently. Otherwise we are not true workers. We are neither those who care for the Lord, nor those who care for the people of the world, nor, in the end, those who care for our own family of faith. Instead we become those who lose their own life. The one who cares only for himself is such a person. The Lord told us this.

It is the same with me. When work piles up and I am pressed by it, there are times when I feel embarrassed before myself. At such times I say to myself: Why do you do nothing but work every day without resting? Should you not enjoy a little leisure and live like a human being while doing this work? There are times when I scold myself like this.

Even the same work, thought of spiritually, overflows with thanksgiving

Yet when I look carefully, preaching the gospel has become harder than before. We earn more money, but the portion spent for the gospel has become smaller than before. In the old days, we earned little, but we served the gospel in proportion to it. Now we earn much, but almost all of it goes into our living and maintaining the business. As the work grows, it costs that much more to maintain the company. Taxes increase, departments multiply, and operating costs rise. So the portion used to serve the gospel becomes small compared with what we earn. How to balance this ratio well is our task. For that, there is no way but to deny ourselves. Now we can only go the way of earning much, spending much, and serving the gospel much as well. Therefore we must think spiritually and think well. Even doing the same work, our thinking must be spiritual.

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A sister abroad received our booklets not long ago. Without even a forklift, she carried the boxes down from the truck one by one in her arms and stacked a hundred and fifty boxes neatly behind the sofa in her house. Then, with a face full of joy, she took pictures and sent them to us. Let us pause here and think about this together for a moment. We too have distributed books, and thought of in fleshly terms, that work can feel truly embarrassing. If you think of stacking up heavy boxes of books and having to give them all out, to the eyes of the flesh it is enough to make you sigh.

Those sisters, having no car, load a box or two of books into a stroller, go out, spread them on the street, speak to people, and hand out the books. Not brothers but sisters are doing that on the streets of an advanced country. People may look at them as failures and despise them. Thought of in fleshly terms, it is truly humiliating work. Yet those sisters keep handing out books, not just for a day or two, and they even apply for more books to be sent. How spiritual they are! They are not even in a position to hear the Word directly, yet how spiritual their thinking is!

In contrast, in some places there were those who, when we tried to send them books, asked us to rent them a warehouse or buy them a computer, seeking only their own gain. Even the same work is different when done with spiritual thinking. Thinking that people will be saved as these books are handed out, we are thankful that the books were sent, thankful for the labor of carrying and stacking them—thankful for all that labor.

Even when we do the same work, if we think only of the labor, we get irritated. The feeling rises: Is there this much work again? But when we think of this work spiritually, when we think of the work of God prospering—how much is gained

through this labor, how well the gospel is being preached—strength springs up. It all depends on how we think.

It is the same when we farm. When we sow lettuce seed and the lettuce comes up, joy overflows at the thought of our family of faith eating it with relish. When a brother grows lettuce and brings it to us, that lettuce is so tender and delicious. How hard the farming must have been! Yet thinking of it spiritually, how thankful and how strengthening it is. With the things we are growing now, we are glad when we think of what we will eat, and even more glad when we think of selling them and serving the gospel. When we think that with every labor of ours God's people fare well, the work of God prospers, and we too fare well, it is so very good.

Become one who diligently follows the Lord

Peter failed for a moment now, but later he was different. According to tradition, when great persecution struck Rome, Peter tried to leave and flee. Then the Lord appeared. When Peter asked, Lord, where are You going? the Lord said, Since you are abandoning My flock and leaving, I must go again to that flock. At this Peter repented and turned back. I will go back and first show an example to my flock. Even at the place of martyrdom I will first show an example by dying valiantly. He went back and was martyred. It is said that he asked to be hung on the cross upside down, saying, Our Lord was crucified upright—how could I die in the same posture as the Lord?—and so he was martyred.

Peter, too, for a moment tried to dissuade the Lord, saying, You must never do that—and received the rebuke, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* But afterward he realized, I was wrong, turned

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back, lived rightly, and departed. All the other disciples were the same. Therefore we too must think spiritually about the tasks entrusted to us. We must know how to think spiritually. Everyone, whatever we do, we do it for God, for the people of the world, and for our family of faith. We do more than others. If we do only a little, there is nothing to share. Only when we do much is there something to share. Everyone, is it not so? That is why we do it even when it is hard.

When a system takes shape and material means come in to some degree, then welfare policies are set up and each department is organized and run in order. When that happens, the work becomes much lighter. We have now entered the transition period moving toward that. That is why it is hard. I know that you are having a hard time. Yesterday as well, some carried out dangerous work on a cliff more than ten meters high. In fact, that is work the people of the world would not do even for pay. But we do that work. Why do we do it? Because by carrying it out well we would serve the gospel, make our living, and serve the people of the world as well. I know that every department is doing the same.

In today's word, when He said, Deny yourself and follow Me, it means: follow the Lord diligently. To deny our own thoughts, we must follow the Lord diligently. If we stay still inside our own thoughts, our thoughts endlessly drag us along. So we must throw away our own thoughts and devote ourselves to the work of God. Then our own thoughts are denied of themselves. When the work at hand is already heavy, what leisure is there for idle thoughts? We cannot entertain them. Everyone, do idle thoughts keep rising in you? Then do the work of God diligently. Then all the idle thoughts come to an end. When we are busy with work, there is no time even to think. When we are absorbed in the work of God, we cannot

think fleshly thoughts. Even if a thought rises, we can only deny it.

Therefore, I ask you to make your environment like that. And so become people of faith, until at last you become people who can deny their own thoughts without even striving. I bless you, that God may give you such faith and make you such people. I close the message. ✉

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CHAPTER

17

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Matthew Chapter 17

< Matthew 17:1-27 >

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, ‘Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.’ And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist. And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ‘Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic

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and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.' Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.' And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.' Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful. When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?' He said, 'Yes.' And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?' Peter said to Him, 'From strangers.' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.'"

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1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 17 records the glory of Jesus revealed on the mountain of transfiguration, John the Baptist who fulfilled the role of Elijah, the disciples who could not heal the demon-possessed boy, Jesus' second prediction of His suffering, and the incident of the temple tax.

At the center of this chapter stands the word of God the Father. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* Jesus is not one among many great prophets like Moses or Elijah, but the Son of God to whom they bore witness.

On the mountain of transfiguration it is revealed that Jesus is the glorious Son of God, and at the foot of the mountain it is revealed that He came into the world to save those who suffer. Jesus came down to the foot of the mountain in order to save suffering people, and at last, after being put to death on the cross, He rose again.

1. Jesus revealed His glory on the mountain of transfiguration (verses 1–3)

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. There the appearance of Jesus was changed, and His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.

This event does not mean that Jesus became the Son of God for the first time at that moment. The glory of God that had been within Jesus from the beginning was specially revealed to the disciples. Ordinarily He went about in the form of a man, but on the mountain of transfiguration His divine glory was disclosed for a while.

This scene is also connected with the word that Jesus had spoken just before. In Matthew 16:28 He said that among those

standing there were some who would see the Son of Man coming with royal authority before they died. Six days later Peter, James, and John saw the glory of Jesus, and so the event on the mountain of transfiguration can be understood as a near fulfillment of that word.

At that time Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses is commonly understood as the one who represents the law, and Elijah as the one who represents the prophets. The law and the prophets of the Old Testament all bore witness to the Christ who was to come, and Jesus stands at the center of that promise.

However, Moses and Elijah also are only servants of God. Jesus is not another prophet placed alongside them, but the Son of God who fulfills the testimony of the law and the prophets.

2. *"Hear Him!"* (verses 4–8)

When Peter saw the amazing sight on the mountain of transfiguration, he said that he would make three tabernacles there. He meant that he would make one each for Jesus, for Moses, and for Elijah. He must have wanted to remain in that glorious moment.

However, before Peter had finished speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and the voice of God was heard out of the cloud. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

This voice does not mean that Moses and Elijah were to be disregarded. The word of God given through them is precious, but it means that from now on they must hear the word of Jesus, to whom the testimony of the law and the prophets points. Jesus is the final revelation of God and the center of salvation.

The disciples heard the voice of God and fell down in great fear. Then Jesus came near, touched them, and said, *"Arise, and*

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do not be afraid." The One who raised up those who had fallen down in fear before the glory of God was also Jesus.

When the disciples lifted up their eyes, it is recorded that *"they saw no one but Jesus only."* Both Moses and Elijah disappeared, and only Jesus remained. All the testimony of the Old Testament leads people to Jesus, but the One who actually saves is Jesus alone.

Faith does not remain in a special experience itself. More important than the amazing sight on the mountain of transfiguration is the command of God, *"Hear Him!"* Spiritual experience also must be discerned under the word of Jesus.

3. The command not to tell what they had seen until the resurrection (verse 9)

As He came down from the mountain, Jesus told the disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen until He was risen from the dead.

If only the glory on the mountain of transfiguration had been proclaimed, people could have misunderstood Jesus as a political Messiah without suffering, or as a king who performed dazzling miracles. What kind of King Jesus is, is fully revealed through the cross and the resurrection.

The glory on the mountain of transfiguration and the suffering of the cross are not opposed to each other. Because Jesus is the glorious Son of God, He is not One who avoids the cross, but One who walks the road of suffering of His own will in order to save sinners. The glory that the disciples saw on the mountain of transfiguration was an event that showed beforehand the glory of the resurrection and of the Kingdom of God that would appear after the cross.

4. John the Baptist, who fulfilled the mission of Elijah (verses 10–13)

The disciples asked Jesus about the teaching of the scribes that "Elijah must come first." Jesus said that Elijah had already come, but that people did not recognize him and did to him whatever they wished. The disciples realized that Jesus had spoken to them of John the Baptist.

This word does not mean that John the Baptist was the Elijah of the Old Testament literally born again. It means that John the Baptist came with the same prophetic mission as Elijah, turned the hearts of people to God, and prepared the way of the Messiah.

People did not recognize John the Baptist, but shut him up in prison and killed him. Jesus said that He also would suffer at the hands of people in the same way. The world that rejected the servant of God would also reject the Son of God.

However, the fact that John the Baptist died does not mean that his mission failed. He proclaimed repentance to people and prepared the way for Jesus to come. He did not bind his own disciples to himself but made them look to Jesus.

5. The demon-possessed boy whom Jesus met at the foot of the mountain (verses 14–18)

When Jesus came down from the mountain, a father came and knelt down. His son suffered severely and often fell into the fire and into the water. The father said that he had brought the boy to the disciples, but that the disciples could not heal him.

Matthew records that this boy suffered from symptoms like epilepsy and at the same time was under the oppression of a demon. However, on the basis of this event we must not generalize that all epilepsy or every mental and physical illness arises because of demons. In the case of this boy, Jesus rebuked the demon, and when the demon came out, the boy was healed.

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Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"O faithless and perverse generation,"* and then told them to bring the boy to Him. What the disciples could not solve, Jesus solved with a single word.

Jesus, who revealed His glory on the mountain of transfiguration, does not turn away from the suffering of real life. The Lord did not remain only on the glorious mountain, but came down to the foot of the mountain and met the suffering boy and his despairing father, and He delivered the boy from the power of the evil spirit.

Believers also must not remain only in a special spiritual experience. Those who have met Jesus must go down to the places of life where suffering people are, and serve them.

6. The meaning of faith as a mustard seed (verses 19–20)

The disciples came to Jesus privately and asked why they could not cast out the demon. Jesus said that it was because their faith was little, and He said that even faith as a mustard seed could move a mountain.

This word does not mean that if people make the quantity of their faith great they can do everything they want. Faith is not self-confidence or the power of positive thinking. It is trusting the living God and entrusting oneself to His word and His will.

A mustard seed is very small. Therefore Jesus teaches that what is important is not how great a person's faith looks, but whether that faith is true and toward whom it is directed. Even a small faith, if it is a true faith directed toward the almighty Jesus, can accomplish what cannot be solved by human strength.

The expression of moving a mountain is a strong figure that shows the overcoming of a great obstacle that seems impossible. This must not be used as a formula for achieving personal desires. Faith is not the power to force one's own will upon God, but trusting and obeying the will of God.

Moreover, even though the disciples had previously experienced casting out demons, past experience itself does not become present power. When we carry out the work of the Lord, we must always rely on God rather than on our own ability.

7. Jesus' second prediction of His suffering and resurrection (verses 22–23)

In Galilee Jesus said to His disciples again that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise on the third day. When the disciples heard this word, they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Jesus did not speak only of His death, but spoke of His resurrection as well. However, because of the shock of His death, the disciples did not sufficiently hear the promise of the resurrection. When the heart of a person is captured by a frightening reality, he can miss the word of hope that God gives together with it.

The glory on the mountain of transfiguration makes clear that Jesus had the power to avoid the cross. However, the Lord walked the road of suffering of His own will in order to save sinners. That the Lord of glory bore the cross Himself is the very grace of salvation.

Jesus did not die because He was overpowered by human strength. He knew what would come upon Him, and He accepted His death and resurrection as the plan of salvation of God and walked that road.

8. Jesus the Son of God and the temple tax (verses 24–26)

When Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum, those who collected the half shekel asked Peter whether Jesus paid the temple tax. This money was not a tax paid to the Roman government but the half shekel that the Jews paid for the upkeep

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of the temple.

Peter answered that Jesus also paid the temple tax. When Peter came into the house, Jesus asked him from whom the kings of the world take taxes, from their own sons or from others. When Peter answered that they take them from others, Jesus said, *"Then the sons are free."*

Because Jesus is the Son of God, He is not one who is under an obligation to pay a tax for the temple of God the Father. He is greater than the temple and is the true owner of the temple.

Both the voice of God heard on the mountain of transfiguration and the incident of the temple tax confirm that Jesus is the Son of God. God the Father Himself said of Jesus, *"This is My beloved Son."*

9. Jesus laid down His own right in order to avoid misunderstanding (verse 27)

Jesus had no obligation to pay the temple tax, but He decided to pay it so as not to cause people to misunderstand. He told Peter to go to the sea and cast in a hook, and to obtain one shekel from the mouth of the fish that was caught first and give it for Jesus and for Peter.

One shekel was the amount of the temple tax for two people, half a shekel each. Jesus provided not only for Himself but also for Peter's share.

By this miracle Jesus revealed that He is the Son of God who rules over nature and all creation. However, this event must not be used as a formula for a financial miracle, as though a believer would obtain money from the mouth of a fish whenever he needed it. The center of the passage is the identity and the sovereignty of Jesus, and His attitude of willingly laying down His own right in order to prevent unnecessary misunderstanding.

Jesus did not insist only on the fact that He was right. Within

the bounds of not violating the will of God, He restrained His freedom so as not to make others stumble. Believers also, even though they have a rightful claim, must be able to yield willingly for the sake of the gospel and the benefit of others.

The core meaning of Matthew Chapter 17

Matthew Chapter 17 proclaims that Jesus is the glorious Son of God. On the mountain of transfiguration His face shone like the sun, and God the Father commanded, *"Hear Him!"* After Moses and Elijah disappeared, only Jesus remained.

However, the road of the Son of God did not remain in the glory on the mountain. Jesus came down to the foot of the mountain and healed the boy oppressed by the demon, and He said that He would be betrayed into the hands of men, be killed, and then rise again. The glory of Jesus is not a glory that avoids the cross, but a glory that gives Himself in order to save sinners and overcomes death.

From the event in which the disciples could not cast out the demon, we realize that the work of the Lord cannot be carried out with human confidence and past experience. Faith is not thinking highly of one's own ability, but trusting Jesus the Son of God and hearing His word.

In the incident of the temple tax, we see Jesus, the Son of God who is the owner of the temple, laying down His own right in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding. The true greatness of Jesus is revealed not only in glory and authority but also in His lowering Himself in order to save people.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 17 is a chapter that shows that Jesus is the beloved Son of God who completes the testimony of the law and the prophets, and that believers must hear and rely on His word alone and follow not only the road of glory but also the road of the cross and of service.

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2) Matthew Chapter 17 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew Chapter 17 consists of Jesus revealing His glory on the mountain of transfiguration, John the Baptist who fulfilled the role of Elijah, the event of healing the demon-possessed boy, the second prediction of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the incident of the temple tax.

In the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the center of this chapter lies in the voice of God. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* Jesus is not one among many prophets like Moses or Elijah. He is the Son of God, and He is the Savior who fulfills all the promises of the law and the prophets.

This chapter itself does not directly explain the baptism of Jesus again. However, the voice of God heard on the mountain of transfiguration is connected with the voice heard from heaven when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Also, in that Jesus confirmed the mission of John the Baptist by saying that Elijah had already come, and spoke again of His own death and resurrection, this chapter has a deep relationship with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel that Jesus the Son of God came clothed in the body of a man, took on all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was judged by shedding His blood on the cross, and rose from the dead and completed the salvation of sinners. The Holy Spirit bears witness to this truth of salvation, and gives the remission of sin and new life to the heart of the one who believes.

1. The glory on the mountain of transfiguration shows that Jesus is the Son of God (verses 1–3)

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. There the face of Jesus shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.

Jesus did not become the Son of God for the first time on the mountain of transfiguration. The original divine glory that had been hidden within the body of a man appeared for a while to the disciples. Ordinarily He was clothed in flesh like ours, but fundamentally He is the Son of the living God.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the identity of Jesus is very important. If Jesus were merely one sinless human being, He could not take on the sins of all the people of the world. On the other hand, if Jesus had not been clothed in the body of a man, He could not have received our sins onto His own body and shed His blood and died.

Jesus came as true God and true man. The Son of God became a man, was baptized by John in the Jordan River, and took on our sins. On the mountain of transfiguration it was revealed that Jesus, who would stand in the place of sinners to receive baptism and be hanged on the cross, is the glorious God.

At that time Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses is commonly understood as the one who represents the law, and Elijah as the one who represents the prophets. This scene shows that the promise of salvation to which the law and the prophets had borne witness was gathering into Jesus.

2. The law of Moses and the sacrificial system pointed to the salvation of Jesus

The law given through Moses reveals the fact that people are sinners. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament also shows how sin passes on to another being, and how the sacrificial

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offering that receives that sin sheds its blood and dies.

In the Old Testament a sinner laid his hands on the head of a spotless sacrificial offering and passed his sins on to it. The offering that received the sins died and shed its blood in the place of the sinner. It was not that the blood of the offering was shed without the laying on of hands; rather, the sinner first passed his sins on to the offering, and then the offering was put to death.

This sacrifice is a type of the salvation that Jesus would accomplish. Jesus came as the spotless Lamb of God. And with the same meaning as the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, He took on the sins of mankind in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. After that, by shedding His blood on the cross, He received in full the punishment for the sins He had taken on.

Therefore the law of Moses and the sacrificial system are fulfilled through the baptism and the cross of Jesus. The law reveals sin, but it cannot completely remove sin. The One who actually took on sin and was judged is Jesus.

3. The command *"Hear Him!"* is the center of gospel faith (verses 4–5)

Peter said that he would make three tabernacles, for Jesus, for Moses, and for Elijah. He must have wanted to remain within the glorious experience on the mountain of transfiguration. However, his words could have resulted in placing Jesus alongside Moses and Elijah.

At that moment God said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* Moses and Elijah are precious servants of God, but they are not in the same position as Jesus. The One to whom the disciples must finally listen is Jesus the Son of God.

This voice is connected with the testimony of heaven that

was heard when Jesus was baptized by John. When Jesus said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,"* and was baptized, God the Father bore witness that Jesus was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased.

What pleased God was that Jesus obeyed the will of the Father and took on the sins of mankind. That the sinless Son stood in the place of sinners and was baptized by John, and that He bore those sins all the way to the cross, was the righteousness of God that saves sinners.

Therefore, *"Hear Him!"* does not remain a mere command to follow the ethical teaching of Jesus. It means that when Jesus tells why He received baptism, why He died on the cross, and why He had to rise again, we must believe that word of salvation.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is a faith that exalts the word of Jesus above human tradition or one's own thoughts. When God says that Jesus took on our sins through His baptism and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection, believers must trust that word more than their own feelings.

4. *"They saw no one but Jesus only"* (verses 6–8)

The disciples heard the voice of God and fell down in fear. Jesus touched them and said, *"Arise, and do not be afraid."* The One who raised up those who trembled in fear before the glory of God was also Jesus.

When the disciples lifted up their eyes, Moses and Elijah had disappeared and only Jesus was seen. The center of salvation is Jesus alone.

Moses delivered the law, but he did not directly take on the sins of people. Elijah preached the word so that the people would turn to God, but he did not die in the place of sinners. John the Baptist also was an important servant of God who baptized Jesus and bore witness to Him, but he was not the Savior himself.

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The One who received our sins onto Himself is Jesus, the One who was judged on the cross is Jesus, and the One who rose from the dead is Jesus. John the Baptist was a man who fulfilled the mission that God appointed, but the Savior who actually took on sin and removed it is Jesus alone.

In the heart of the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit also, only the righteousness of Jesus must remain. We must not place our own repentance, good deeds, and religious merits alongside the salvation of Jesus. The ground of the remission of sin is not what I have done but what Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

5. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sin by believing in the salvation of Jesus

Matthew Chapter 17 is not a passage that directly explains the process of receiving the Holy Spirit. However, seen in the flow of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the work of the Holy Spirit is not separated from believing the word of Jesus and His work of salvation.

The Holy Spirit does not mean merely an intense emotion or a special phenomenon. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He took on all sins through the baptism He received from John and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection.

A person must not be convinced that he has received the Holy Spirit merely by religious zeal or an emotional experience while he still keeps sin in his heart. He must first believe in his heart the gospel that God has solved all sin in Jesus, and receive the remission of sin.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the one who has received the remission of sin in his heart by believing in the righteousness of

Jesus, and bears witness that he is a child of God. Therefore the work of the Holy Spirit does not make a person boast of his own experience and ability, but makes him believe and exalt the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus alone.

6. John the Baptist, who fulfilled the mission of Elijah (verses 9–13)

As they came down from the mountain, the disciples asked why the scribes taught that Elijah must come first. Jesus said that Elijah had already come, but that people did not recognize him and did to him whatever they wished. The disciples realized that Jesus had spoken to them of John the Baptist.

That John the Baptist was Elijah does not mean that Elijah was literally born again. It means that John the Baptist came with the same prophetic mission as Elijah. If Elijah did the work of turning the heart of Israel to God, John the Baptist preached repentance to people and prepared the way of Jesus.

In the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the most important mission of John the Baptist was that he baptized Jesus. As the representative of mankind appointed by God, he administered a baptism in the form of laying his hands on the head of Jesus, and by receiving that baptism Jesus took on all the sins of the world.

That the role of John the Baptist is important does not mean that we exalt him as the Savior. It means that we rightly understand the mission that God entrusted to him within the order of salvation. John fulfilled the role of passing sin on, and Jesus actually bore that sin and was judged on the cross.

Just as people did not recognize John the Baptist and did to him whatever they wished, so today also people can think lightly of the meaning of the baptism that Jesus received from John. However, if we do not know the baptism of Jesus, it is difficult

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to understand fully what sins were judged on the cross.

Jesus said that just as John suffered, He also would suffer at the hands of people. The rejection of John the Baptist makes us look ahead to the cross of Jesus.

7. Jesus, who healed the demon-possessed boy, is the Savior who is stronger than sin and Satan (verses 14–18)

A father came to Jesus and begged Him to have mercy on his son, who was suffering under the oppression of a demon. The boy often fell into the fire and into the water and suffered severely. The disciples could not heal that boy.

In this event we must not interpret the fire and the water as directly corresponding to the cross and the baptism of Jesus. The passage speaks of a boy who actually suffered and of the power of the evil spirit that held him. Also, on the basis of this event we must not generalize that all epilepsy or every physical and mental illness arises because of demons.

Yet seen in the dimension of the gospel, the helpless state of this boy makes us think of a human being who cannot save himself under the power of sin and Satan. Human religious methods and efforts alone cannot fundamentally break the power of sin.

The disciples could not heal him, but Jesus rebuked the demon and cast it out. Jesus is the Son of God who is stronger than the power of sin, Satan, and death. The Lord bore our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, ended the judgment of sin on the cross, and overcame the power of death by His resurrection.

The father brought his son to Jesus, and Jesus healed him. The work of preaching the gospel likewise is not a work of saving souls by human strength. It is the work of leading a person bound by sin to Jesus and making him believe the

salvation that the Lord accomplished.

8. Faith as a mustard seed is not a small self-confidence but faith that believes the true gospel (verses 19–20)

When the disciples asked why they could not cast out the demon, Jesus said that it was because their faith was little. And He said that even faith as a mustard seed could move a mountain.

This word does not mean that we can accomplish anything if we are strongly convinced in our hearts. Faith is not human willpower or the power of positive thinking. It is trusting Jesus, the object of faith, and His word.

A mustard seed is small, but it is a living seed. Likewise, what is important about faith is not whether it looks great outwardly but whether it is true. However great religious zeal may look, if one believes a wrong teaching he cannot obtain life. On the other hand, faith that believes the salvation Jesus accomplished just as the Word says, even though it looks small and weak, gives life to sinners.

The faith of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a faith that says, "Because I believe strongly, my sins disappear." It is the faith that accepts the fact that before I believed, Jesus had already taken on all my sins through His baptism, had paid the wages of those sins on the cross, and had completed salvation by His resurrection.

The power of salvation lies not in the emotion of my faith but in the work that Jesus accomplished. Faith is like a hand that receives that completed salvation as one's own.

The expression 'moving a mountain' shows that an obstacle that looks humanly impossible is solved by the will and the power of God. In its gospel application, we can think of the great mountain of sin and condemnation, which no human effort could move, being removed by believing in the righteousness of Jesus.

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However, this word must not be used like an incantation for achieving personal desires.

9. The reason Jesus had to be killed is that He took on sin through His baptism (verses 22–23)

Jesus said again that He would be betrayed into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise on the third day. The disciples were exceedingly sorrowful when they heard the word about His death, but Jesus spoke of His death and His resurrection together.

The death of Jesus was not a tragedy that happened suddenly. Jesus had already taken on all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The One who had taken on sin had to go to the cross in order to receive the punishment for that sin.

The baptism of Jesus is the taking on of sin, the blood of the cross is the judgment of sin, and the resurrection is the completion of salvation and the evidence of new life. These three events are not separate gospels but one work of salvation.

If Jesus had not taken on sin through His baptism, we could not explain why His death on the cross became the judgment of our sins. On the other hand, if He had only taken on sin and had not died on the cross, the punishment for sin would not have been resolved. If He had not risen again, the victory over death would not have been completed.

Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes all of the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples at that time thought only of His death and were sorrowful, but believers must look also to the resurrection and the eternal life that lie beyond the cross.

10. The Son of God, the owner of the temple, lowered Himself (verses 24–26)

Those who collected the half shekel asked Peter whether Jesus also paid the temple tax. Jesus said that the kings of the world take taxes not from their own sons but from others, and He said, *"Then the sons are free."*

Because Jesus is the Son of God, He is not one who is under an obligation to pay a tax for the temple of God the Father. He is greater than the temple and is the owner of the temple.

This word is connected with the testimony of God heard on the mountain of transfiguration, *"This is My beloved Son."* From the beginning to the end, Matthew Chapter 17 proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God.

However, Jesus the Son of God did not insist only on His own right. So as not to cause people to misunderstand, He decided to pay the temple tax. This shows us Jesus, who lowered Himself in order to save sinners.

That the sinless Son of God received baptism from John is the same kind of lowering. Jesus had no sin of His own, but He stood in the place of sinners and took on the sins of mankind. And He was hanged on the cross like a sinner and was judged.

Jesus is originally the Lord of the law, but He came under the law in order to save us. Because the Lord of glory was clothed in the form of a servant and lowered Himself, we sinners could become the children of God.

11. The one shekel in the mouth of the fish shows the sovereignty and the provision of the Lord (verse 27)

Jesus told Peter to go to the sea and cast in a hook, and to obtain one shekel from the mouth of the fish that was caught first and give it for Jesus and for Peter. One shekel was the amount with which the half shekel of two people could be paid.

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By this miracle Jesus revealed that He is the Son of God who rules over nature and all creation and who supplies exactly what is needed. However, this event must not be interpreted as a promise that a believer will always obtain miraculous money.

The direct meaning of the passage is that Jesus, the Son who had no obligation to pay the temple tax, laid down His own right so as not to make others stumble.

Seen in its gospel application, Jesus provided even the share of Peter. Of course the temple tax cannot be directly identified with the punishment for sin. However, the heart of Jesus, who laid down His own right and supplied what was needed for another, makes us think of the love of the cross, by which He gave Himself for sinners.

Believers also must not insist only on the fact that they are right and free. Within the bounds of not violating the Word of God, they must be able to restrain their own rights so as not to make others stumble unnecessarily.

The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew Chapter 17 proclaims

Matthew Chapter 17 bears witness that Jesus is the glorious Son of God. On the mountain of transfiguration His face shone like the sun, and God the Father said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

The word of Jesus that we must hear is the word about how He saved sinners. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received in full the punishment for those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead and gave us the remission of sin and new life.

The law of Moses and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament showed this salvation beforehand, and John the

Baptist, who came with the mission of Elijah, prepared the way of Jesus and baptized the Lord. However, the actual Savior is Jesus alone. Just as it is said that when the disciples lifted up their eyes *"they saw no one but Jesus only,"* only the righteousness of Jesus must remain as the ground of the remission of sin.

Jesus, who healed the demon-possessed boy, is the Savior who solves even the problem of sin and death that human ability cannot solve. Faith as a mustard seed is not making one's self-confidence great, but true faith that accepts the salvation Jesus accomplished just as the Word says.

Jesus is the glorious Son of God, but He lowered Himself in order to save us. He received baptism in the place of sinners, received the punishment of sinners on the cross, and rose again and made us the children of God. Therefore the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not boast of a special experience or of his own merit, but lives hearing the word of Jesus alone and believing in His righteousness.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 17 is a chapter that shows that Jesus, the glorious Son of God, took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection, and that since the Holy Spirit dwells in the one who has received the remission of sin by believing this gospel, we must believe and follow not Moses or Elijah or our own righteousness but the word and the righteousness of Jesus alone. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 17

Jesus, the glorious Son of God, lowered Himself in order to save us

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 17 begins with the event on the mountain of transfiguration. When Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain, His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light, and Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him. While Peter was saying that he would make three tabernacles, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice came from heaven. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* The glory on the mountain of transfiguration bears witness that Jesus is not one of the prophets but the beloved Son of God.

Moses represents the law, and Elijah represents the prophets. The law and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament showed beforehand the salvation that Jesus would accomplish, in the way that a sinner passed his sins on by the laying on of hands and the offering shed its blood and died, and the prophets bore witness to the Christ who was to come. However, when the disciples lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Because the salvation to which the law and the prophets pointed is completed in Jesus, the One we must look to until the end is Jesus alone.

On the way down from the mountain the disciples asked

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about the saying of the scribes that Elijah must come first, and Jesus said that Elijah had already come, but that people did not know him and did to him whatever they wished. The disciples realized that this was a word spoken of John the Baptist. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah and prepared the way of the Lord, and he was the messenger of God who, representing mankind, baptized Jesus and thereby passed the sin of the world on to Him.

At the foot of the mountain the disciples were not able to heal a boy who was demon-possessed and suffering severely. When Jesus rebuked the demon, it came out and the boy was cured from that very hour. When the disciples asked why they could not cast it out, Jesus said that it was because their faith was little, and He said that if they had faith as a mustard seed they could move a mountain. Faith as a mustard seed is not the size of one's own confidence, but faith that believes what is true even though it looks small. Power does not come from the zeal of faith but from Jesus, the object of faith.

When they were staying in Galilee, Jesus predicted His suffering and resurrection for the second time, saying that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise on the third day. The reason Jesus had to be killed is that He had already taken on all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Bearing those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the cross and received all the judgment, and by rising from the dead He overcame the power of sin and death. Also, when those who received the temple tax came in Capernaum, the Son of God, the owner of the temple, had no obligation to pay the tax, but in order to avoid misunderstanding He had the tax for Himself and for Peter paid with one shekel that came out of the mouth of a fish. Jesus walked the road of lowering Himself by laying down

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His own right.

Matthew Chapter 17 proclaims that Jesus, the glorious Son of God, lowered Himself and walked the road of death in order to save sinners. Now, as we look at the words of the passage in order, we will consider the Jesus to whom the glory on the mountain of transfiguration bears witness, the mission of John the Baptist, the meaning of faith as a mustard seed, and the grace of the Lord who lowered Himself.

The glory on the mountain of transfiguration proclaims that Jesus alone is the Son of God who completes the law and the prophets and saves sinners

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only." (Matthew 17:1–8)

This event took place six days after Jesus said, "*There are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son*

of Man coming in His kingdom." Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain and showed them beforehand His own glory, in which He would appear with royal authority.

Just before this, Jesus had said that He would go up to Jerusalem, suffer, be killed, and rise again on the third day. The disciples did not understand the figure of the Christ who would suffer and die. So Jesus showed them that the One who would bear the cross was not merely a weak human being, but the Son of God who from the beginning possessed the glory of heaven.

That the face of Jesus shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light does not mean that Jesus became the Son of God for the first time at that moment. He was God from the beginning, but in order to save sinners He was clothed in the flesh of a man and veiled His own glory. On the mountain of transfiguration He revealed that glory so that the disciples might see His original glory for a while.

Jesus did not become the Christ because He died on the cross; rather, because He was from the beginning the Son of God and the Christ, He could give Himself for sinners. The glory on the mountain of transfiguration and the cross of Calvary are not opposed to each other. That the Lord of glory loved sinners, lowered Himself, and walked the road of suffering is the gospel of the cross.

At that time Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Matthew does not record the content of the conversation they had, so there is no need to force a guess about what it was. What is important is the fact that Moses, who represents the law, and Elijah, who represents the prophets, appeared together with Jesus.

The law given through Moses reveals the fact that all people are sinners and that the wages of sin is death. The sacrificial system that God gave also shows the principle of salvation, that

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sin passes on to a sacrificial offering and that the offering must shed its blood and die in the sinner's place for sin to be remitted. However, the sacrifice of animals was a shadow that foreshadowed the salvation of Jesus Christ who was to come.

Elijah was a prophet who brought a people fallen into idolatry back to God. Also, in the passage that follows, Jesus explains that the Elijah who was prophesied to come refers to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the man who prepared the way of the Lord, baptized Jesus, and bore witness to Him as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the law and the sacrificial system that Moses delivered were fulfilled in Jesus. Just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament received sin through the laying on of hands, Jesus took on the sins of all mankind in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He was hanged on the cross, shed His blood, died, and rose again on the third day, and thereby completely accomplished the judgment of sin that the law demands.

Therefore Moses and Elijah are not other saviors competing with Jesus. The law that Moses received and the prophecies of the prophets, including Elijah, all point to Jesus Christ. The law makes us realize sin, the prophets bear witness to the Savior who was to come, and Jesus is the One who actually fulfilled all those words.

Seeing this glorious sight, Peter said, *"Let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."* He must have wanted to remain in that place. He probably also had a heart that wished the glory on the mountain to continue without Jesus having to suffer.

However, in the proposal of Peter there was also the error of putting Jesus in the same position as Moses and Elijah. Jesus is

not one among great prophets but the only begotten Son of God to whom Moses and Elijah looked and bore witness. Moreover, the work of saving sinners is not accomplished by making tabernacles on the mountain and remaining there. Jesus had to go down from the mountain, bear the sin of the world, and die on the cross.

While Peter was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and the voice of God the Father was heard. *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* This word confirms the identity and the authority of Jesus. The words of Moses and Elijah are also important, but from now on we must hear the word of Jesus the Son of God, who completes all those words.

This voice is connected with the word heard from heaven immediately after Jesus received baptism from John. When Jesus took on all the sins of the world through His baptism, God the Father bore witness that He was His own beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. On the mountain of transfiguration also, God bore witness in the same way to Jesus, who was walking the road of the cross and the resurrection, as His beloved Son.

The command *"Hear Him!"* means to believe the word of Jesus rather than the thoughts of people. Peter had earlier told Jesus not to bear the cross, but God told them to hear the word of Jesus concerning His suffering, death, and resurrection. To people the cross may look like failure, but to God it is the righteous work that saves mankind.

Today also we must not put a special experience or a visible miracle ahead of the word of Jesus. Peter and the other disciples saw amazing glory with their own eyes, but God did not tell them to hold on to that sight; He told them to hear the word of Jesus. True faith is founded not on a vision or an emotion but on the

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word of the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

The disciples heard the voice of God, fell down, and were greatly afraid. A human being who has sin cannot stand before the glory of the holy God by his own strength. Before the law and the holiness of God, a person cannot but realize his own sin and be afraid. Human good deeds and religious zeal cannot remove this fear.

At that moment Jesus came near to the disciples, touched them, and said, *"Arise, and do not be afraid."* The One who raises up the sinner who has fallen down in fear is Jesus. The law reveals sin but does not remove sin. Jesus alone removes sin through His baptism and the cross and enables a sinner to rise up boldly before God.

When the disciples lifted up their eyes, it is said that *"they saw no one but Jesus only."* This does not mean that the law of Moses or the words of the prophets became useless. It means that all the words of the law and the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus, and that salvation can be received only through Jesus Christ.

We must not look to the merit of having kept the law well or to our own good deeds. No religious leader and no special experience can be the object of faith. We must believe only the fact that Jesus took on all our sins through His baptism, received the punishment for those sins on the cross, and rose again. The One who remains at the end of salvation is Jesus alone.

The glory of Jesus that appeared on the mountain of transfiguration also shows the hope that will be given to the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Now we live in the weakness of the flesh and in the sufferings of the world, but when the risen Jesus comes again, believers also will be changed into glorious bodies. However, the road that leads to that glory is not human merit or a mystical experience but the

faith that believes the salvation Jesus completed.

Therefore this passage is not a word that teaches us to look at Moses, Elijah, and Jesus side by side. It is a word that tells us to follow all the testimony of the law and the prophets and to look to Jesus alone and hear His word. Jesus is the Son of the living God, and He is the Christ who saved us through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. When we believe in this Jesus, we can rise up from the fear of sin and have the hope of sharing in the glory of God.

John the Baptist, who came with the mission of Elijah, is the servant of God who passed the sin of the world on to Jesus and prepared the way of salvation

"Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:9–13)

On the mountain of transfiguration the face of Jesus shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. Peter, James, and John also saw Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. However, as He came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until He was risen from the dead.

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That Jesus told them to keep the event on the mountain of transfiguration hidden was not because that event was unimportant. It was because the disciples and the Jews could see only the glory of Jesus and misunderstand Him as a political king or as a Messiah who would free Israel from Rome. The true kingship of Jesus is not revealed by seizing worldly power; it had first to be revealed through the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection by which sinners are saved.

If only the glory on the mountain of transfiguration had been proclaimed before the resurrection, people would have expected only a glorious Christ apart from suffering and the cross. However, Jesus had to take on all the sins of sinners, be judged on the cross, and then rise again. Therefore the gospel must not proclaim only a special experience or a glorious sight, but must bear witness to the salvation completed through the baptism, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus.

Because the disciples had seen Elijah himself on the mountain, they recalled the word that the scribes had taught. In the last part of the Old Testament it is recorded that God promised to send Elijah before the great and dreadful day came. So the disciples asked who this Elijah was, who had to come before the Christ and restore all things.

Jesus said, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things."* This is a word by which He acknowledged that the promise of God recorded in the Old Testament was not wrong. God promised that before the Christ He would send a servant to carry out the mission of Elijah, so that the people might be prepared to receive the Savior.

However, the Elijah spoken of here does not mean that the Elijah of the Old Testament was born again in another body. It means that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah and carried out the same mission that had been entrusted

to Elijah. John the Baptist proclaimed repentance to the people, turned their hearts to God, and prepared the way of the Christ.

That he "restores all things" does not mean that John the Baptist would make the world perfect by his own power. It means that he would prepare the order of salvation so that a human being, who had become an enemy of God because of sin, could return to God through the salvation of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was not the Savior, but a servant of God who was raised up to pass the sin of the world on to the Savior and to bear witness to Him.

In the law of Moses and the sacrificial system, a sinner laid his hands on the head of a sacrificial offering and passed his sins on to it. On the Day of Atonement, when the sins of the people of Israel for one year were atoned for, the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering as the representative of the people. The sacrificial offering that received the sins received the punishment for sin in their place by shedding its blood and dying. This law of sacrifice showed beforehand the eternal atonement that Jesus would accomplish.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the one who represented mankind. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took on all the sins of all mankind in His own body. Because this was the righteous method of salvation that God had appointed, Jesus said when He received baptism, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."*

When Jesus was baptized and came up from the water, God the Father bore witness, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* This is the evidence that the Son of God obeyed the will of the Father and took on the sin of the world. The Holy Spirit also descended like a dove and revealed that Jesus is the Christ who fulfills the will of God.

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The next day John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and bore witness, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* That Jesus took away the sin of the world does not mean that He bore some sins without any ground. Because He received the sin of the world onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, He could bear those sins and go to the cross.

On the cross Jesus said, *"It is finished!"* and shed His blood and died. He received on the cross all the punishment for the sins He had taken on through His baptism. And by rising from the dead, He overcame sin and death and gave eternal life to those who believe. Therefore the mission of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, and the death on the cross and the resurrection are connected with one another within the plan of salvation of God.

However, to regard the role of John the Baptist as important does not mean to exalt him as a savior like Jesus. The Savior who took on sin, received judgment, and rose again is Jesus Christ alone. John the Baptist baptized Jesus and bore witness to Him as the Lamb of God, and then, saying, *"He must increase, but I must decrease,"* he was a servant who finished his own mission.

Jesus said that Elijah had already come, but that people did not know him and did to him whatever they wished. People did not believe the work that John the Baptist did according to the will of God. Herod shut John up in prison because he pointed out his sin, and at last he beheaded him. The religious leaders also did not acknowledge that the baptism of John was from heaven.

Those who rejected John the Baptist finally rejected Jesus as well. So Jesus said, *"Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands."* Just as people treated the servant of God

according to their own thoughts, they also condemned the Son of God according to their own judgment and nailed Him to the cross. Yet even in human rejection and evil deeds, God accomplished His will of salvation.

This word teaches us not to judge the work of God by outward appearance or by the evaluation of the world. John the Baptist did not have splendid power or a high religious position, but he was a servant whom God sent. The scribes, on the other hand, knew the Scriptures well, but they did not recognize the mission of Elijah and the Christ who had appeared before them.

True repentance does not end merely in regretting one's own faults or shedding tears. It is acknowledging that one is a sinner who cannot be made righteous by keeping the law, and returning to the righteousness that God accomplished in Jesus. To believe the fact that Jesus took on all my sins through His baptism, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and rose again is the faith that returns to God.

The word that he "restores all things" is finally completed in Jesus Christ. John the Baptist prepared that way and carried out the mission of passing the sin of the world on to Jesus, but the One who actually restored the relationship between God and sinners is Jesus. Because Jesus solved the problem of sin through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection, the one who believes can receive the remission of sin and become a child of God.

Therefore we must not seek only a mystical experience like that on the mountain of transfiguration, but must believe the word of the salvation that Jesus completed. Also, we must not believe the cross alone in isolation, but must realize, according to the Scriptures, why God sent John the Baptist and what it meant that Jesus received baptism from him. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is made up of the

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baptism of Jesus, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection, the relationship with God that was ruined by sin is restored and we can reach true salvation.

True faith as a mustard seed is faith that relies not on one's own ability but on Jesus, who overcame sin and death

"And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.' Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.' And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.'" (Matthew 17:14–20)

When Jesus, Peter, James, and John came down from the mountain of transfiguration, at the foot of the mountain there were a suffering boy and disciples who could do nothing. On the mountain the glory in which the face of Jesus shone like the sun appeared, but at the foot of the mountain there was the miserable reality of a boy who was seized by a demon and fell into the fire and into the water. This shows that Jesus is One who did not remain only on the glorious mountain but came down into the

world in order to save suffering sinners.

A father came to Jesus, knelt down before Him, and begged, *"Lord, have mercy on my son."* He could not heal his son by his own strength, and though he had taken him to the disciples, they also could not heal him. Now the only hope left to him was the mercy and the power of Jesus.

What is important in the plea of this father is the word *"have mercy."* Salvation is not something that a person obtains by boasting of something before God and paying a price. Salvation comes to a sinner because God had mercy on him and sent Jesus Christ by His grace. A person must acknowledge his own inability and seek the mercy of the Lord.

The passage records that the boy suffered severely from symptoms like epilepsy and that a demon was harming him. However, on the basis of this word we must not judge all epilepsy or mental illness today as demon possession. Illness must receive proper medical diagnosis and treatment, and we must not condemn a sick person as one who has no faith or as one who is possessed by a demon. This passage records the case of one boy who was under a special attack of a demon.

The demon made the boy fall into the fire and into the water in order to drive him to death. The fundamental work of the devil is to draw a person away from life and lead him to destruction. The devil deceives the heart of a person with lies, holds him captive to the condemnation and the fear of sin, and keeps him from coming to God.

The father first took his son to the disciples, but the disciples could not heal him. Jesus had previously given the disciples authority to cast out demons. Nevertheless, this time they failed. This shows the fact that even though a person has experienced grace in the past and has received an office and a mission, the power of God does not always appear automatically.

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The disciples may have relied on the authority they had received or on their previous success, but the source of actual power is always Jesus. Those who preach the gospel and those who work in the church also cannot save souls by themselves. The servant of God is only an instrument that preaches the gospel, and the One who saves sinners and delivers them from the power of the devil is Jesus Christ alone.

Jesus rebuked them, saying, *"O faithless and perverse generation."* To be 'perverse' means the state of a heart that has turned aside from the Word of God and become crooked. People say that they believe in God, but in reality they rely on their own thoughts and abilities, and when a problem arises they give greater authority to the circumstances before their eyes than to the word of the Lord.

This rebuke does not mean that the suffering boy became ill because his faith was insufficient. We must not condemn a sick and suffering person by saying that it is because he has no faith. The rebuke of Jesus was directed at the unbelief of the whole generation and of the disciples, who could not believe the Son of God who was among them and remained within human thoughts and abilities.

Jesus said, *"Bring him here to Me."* Even though the disciples could not solve it, Jesus had the power to solve it. Even when human religious effort and wisdom have failed, we must not despair but must come to Jesus. Human failure does not limit the power of Jesus.

When Jesus rebuked the demon, the demon came out and the boy was cured from that very hour. Jesus did not use a long ritual or a special incantation. He rebuked the demon with a word, and the demon immediately obeyed. This shows that Jesus is the Son of God who rules over every evil spirit and the power of death.

In a place where there were no people, the disciples asked

Jesus, *"Why could we not cast it out?"* That they did not hide or excuse their failure but asked the Lord the reason was a necessary attitude. When we fail in our life of faith, rather than blaming other people or our circumstances, we must examine our own faith before the Word of God.

Jesus answered, *"Because of your unbelief."* Here, that their faith was little does not mean that the disciples did not think positively enough. It means that their hearts were held more by the difficulty before their eyes and by their own ability than by the authority and the word of Jesus.

Jesus said that if they had faith as a mustard seed they could move even a mountain. A mustard seed is very small, but life is contained within it. Likewise, what is important about true faith is not its outward size or the intensity of emotion, but toward whom that faith is directed and in what word it is rooted.

Great faith is not shouting out confidence loudly. True faith is acknowledging one's own weakness and yet believing that the word of Jesus is certainly true. It is not because the ability of the believer is great that the mountain is moved; it is because all authority belongs to the Jesus on whom he relies that what is impossible is accomplished.

Here the mountain represents a huge obstacle that a person cannot solve by his own strength. We must not use this word literally and take it to mean that we may accomplish whatever we want or move an actual mountain to prove our own ability. Faith is not a means of making God submit to our own desires but of submitting our own will to the will of God.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the greatest mountain that lies before a human being is sin and the judgment that comes because of that sin. No one can move this mountain of sin by his own good deeds, prayers, or works of the law. However, Jesus took on all the sins of all mankind in

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His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And by receiving all the punishment for sin on the cross and rising from the dead, He completely removed the mountain of sin and death.

Therefore faith as a mustard seed is not a faith that vaguely thinks, 'Everything will turn out well.' It is believing in one's heart the word that Jesus took on all my sins through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and saved me by rising again. The one who has this faith does not look at his own feelings or deeds but looks at the righteousness of God that Jesus completed.

The devil deceives a person, saying, "You are still a sinner," and, "You cannot be saved because your deeds are insufficient." However, the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit can defeat that lie with the word that Jesus took on all his sins. It is not because the deeds of the believer are perfect but because the salvation of Jesus is perfect that the condemnation of sin can no longer rule over him.

The word *"nothing will be impossible for you"* does not mean that the one who believes comes to have unlimited power like God. It means that when we believe and rely on the Lord within the will of God, the work of the gospel that is impossible for human strength is accomplished. That a sinner hears the gospel and receives the remission of sin, and that he escapes the lies of the devil and becomes a child of God, is a miracle that human ability cannot perform.

Also, this word is not a verse that promises that if one has faith every illness will certainly be healed at once. God can heal illness, but when and how He heals it belongs to the sovereignty of God. The one who believes must pray for his illness and also receive proper treatment, and even if he is not healed on this earth, he must believe and hope that on the day of resurrection

all weakness will disappear.

In the end this passage teaches us not to rely on our own experience and office but to believe in Jesus. Even in the place where the disciples failed, Jesus healed the boy completely. We also must not try to overcome sin and the devil by our own ability, but must rely on Jesus, who completed salvation through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection. When we have true faith as a mustard seed rooted in this gospel, we can overcome the condemnation of sin and live boldly according to the word of the Lord even in the face of difficulties that block the gospel.

That Jesus would be betrayed into the hands of men, die, and rise again is the will of God appointed in order to save sinners

"Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful." (Matthew 17:22–23)

When the disciples were gathered together in Galilee, Jesus spoke again of His own death and resurrection. In Matthew Chapter 16 He predicted His suffering, death, and resurrection for the first time, and here He taught the same fact again. The cross and the resurrection are not incidental events in the ministry of Jesus but the core of the salvation of mankind.

Jesus called Himself *"the Son of Man."* The Son of Man indicates that Jesus came to this earth clothed in a human body like ours, but at the same time it is a name that refers to the Messiah who would receive eternal royal authority from God. Jesus came as true God and true man and accomplished the work of salvation in the place of sinners.

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The word *"is about to be betrayed into the hands of men"* means that Jesus knew beforehand what would happen. The arrest and death of Jesus were not a failure that He did not expect. Knowing that He would be betrayed and handed over into the hands of the religious leaders and the Roman rulers, Jesus did not avoid that road.

Those who handed Jesus over and killed Him clearly bear responsibility for that sin. However, even in their evil deeds God accomplished the will that He had established in order to save sinners. Jesus did not die because He was forced to yield to human power, but obeyed the will of the Father and gave up His own life willingly.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there was a work that Jesus had to accomplish first, before He was betrayed into the hands of men. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took on all the sins of all mankind in His own body. The Son of God, who had no sin at all, became the representative of sinners and bore all the sins of the world.

Because the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who had taken on the sin of the world, had to die on the cross. The cross of Jesus was not simply an event in which one righteous man was unjustly sacrificed. It was the judgment of redemption in which He received in our place the punishment for the sins of all mankind that He had taken on through His baptism. That Jesus was scourged, was nailed to the cross, shed His blood, and died is the work by which He completely paid the wages of our sins.

Therefore the baptism of Jesus and the cross cannot be separated from each other. If we do not know the way in which Jesus took on sin, the meaning of the cross is not fully revealed. Also, if we speak of the baptism of Jesus and leave out the death on the cross, we cannot explain how the judgment of sin was

accomplished.

When we believe the fact that Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John and received the punishment for those sins on the cross, we come to know how the righteousness of God was accomplished. God did not simply regard sin as though it had never been, but passed those sins on to His Son and judged them righteously in the body of Jesus. Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel of salvation in which the love and the justice of God appear together.

Jesus did not speak only of His being killed, but clearly said, *"the third day He will be raised up."* The death on the cross was not the end of salvation. After receiving all the punishment for the sin of the world, Jesus rose from the dead and completely overcame the power of sin, death, and the devil.

The resurrection of Jesus is the evidence that He is the Son of God and that He completed the work of salvation. If Jesus had remained in the tomb, He could not be the Savior who overcame sin and death. However, Jesus rose on the third day just as He had said, and He gave the remission of sin, new life, and the hope of resurrection to those who believe in Him.

The disciples heard this word and were exceedingly sorrowful. Because they loved Jesus, it was hard for them to accept the word that the Lord would die. Also, because they expected that Jesus would become the king of the world and soon reveal His glory, the word that He would be killed must have sounded as though all their hope was collapsing.

However, the disciples were captured by the word that Jesus would die, but they did not sufficiently hold on to the promise that He would rise on the third day. If they had fully believed the word of the resurrection as well, they could have had hope even in their sorrow. When the heart of a person is captured by a

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frightening reality, he easily misses the promise that God has given together with it, even though he hears it.

We also become sorrowful if we look only at the words about suffering and death. However, the word of Jesus never ends in death but always leads to the resurrection. For the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the death of the flesh is not the end of everything. In the risen Jesus, eternal life and the glory that is to come are promised.

This passage also teaches the fact that we must not expect only a faith without suffering. Jesus was the Son of God, but He walked the road of suffering and the cross. For the one who believes also, difficulties and losses can arise in the course of believing and following the gospel. However, suffering itself does not accomplish salvation, and our salvation depends solely on the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection that Jesus took upon Himself.

The disciples later actually scattered when they saw the arrest and the cross of Jesus, but after they met the risen Jesus they realized the meaning of that word. Those who had been sorrowful became witnesses of the resurrection and preached the gospel boldly. It was because they came to know that the death of Jesus was not a failure but the victory that saved sinners.

Therefore these two verses show the core of the gospel briefly and clearly. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of men and was killed, but He knew all these things beforehand and bore them willingly for us. He bore our sins through His baptism and paid the wages of sin on the cross, and He completed salvation by rising on the third day. We must not be sorrowful looking only at the suffering before our eyes, but must fully believe the word of Jesus, who overcame even death, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus, the owner of the temple, had no obligation to pay the tax, but He provided even the share of Peter and used His freedom in love and service

"When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?' He said, 'Yes.' And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?' Peter said to Him, 'From strangers.' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.'" (Matthew 17:24–27)

When Jesus and His disciples arrived in Capernaum, those who collected the half shekel came to Peter. The half shekel spoken of here was not an ordinary tax paid to the Roman government but the temple tax that the Jews offered every year for the upkeep of the temple and for worship. They asked Peter, *"Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?"*

This question contained the intention of examining whether Jesus was properly keeping the religious duties of the Jews. If Jesus did not pay the temple tax, people could accuse Him of being one who disregarded the temple and the law. Without thinking deeply, Peter immediately answered, *"Yes."*

When Peter came into the house, Jesus asked him first, before he spoke. Jesus was the Son of God who knew even the conversation that had taken place outside and the heart of Peter.

Jesus asked, *"From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?"* Generally a king does not take taxes from his own sons but from his people.

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Peter also answered, *"From strangers."* Then Jesus said, *"Then the sons are free."*

The temple is the house of God the Father, and Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. Therefore Jesus is essentially One who has no obligation to pay the temple tax. That the owner of the temple should pay a tax for His own temple does not fit logically. This word shows the fact that Jesus is not a mere teacher of the law or a prophet but the Son of God who is the owner of the temple.

Moreover, Jesus was One who had no sin at all. The temple and the sacrificial system were given so that sinners could come to God, but Jesus was not a sinner who had to receive atonement. Rather, He was the Lamb of God who came in order to take on the sins of sinners and to give Himself as the eternal sacrifice of atonement.

Nevertheless, Jesus said that He would pay the temple tax *"lest we offend them."* Jesus did not deny the truth that He is the Son of God. He only laid down His own right willingly, so that before He completed His work through the cross and the resurrection, unnecessary misunderstanding and dispute would not arise over a secondary matter such as the temple tax.

Here we can learn what true freedom is. Jesus had the right to be free from the tax, but He did not claim that right for Himself. He used His freedom in love, so that no unnecessary stumbling block would arise for the soul of another. The one who believes the gospel also must think of the faith and the benefit of others rather than insisting only on his own right.

However, this word does not mean that we should not speak the truth in any situation and should submit unconditionally to the demands of people. Jesus never compromised concerning the truth of the gospel and the will of God. He only avoided unnecessary quarrels in matters not directly related to salvation,

and acted wisely so that the more important work of the gospel would not be hindered.

Jesus told Peter to go to the sea and cast in a hook. And He said that when he opened the mouth of the fish that was caught first he would obtain one shekel, and that he should take it and *"give it to them for Me and you."* One shekel was the amount that combined the half shekel that each of the two of them had to pay.

By causing exactly one shekel to come out of the mouth of a fish, Jesus revealed that He is the Creator who rules over all creation and all circumstances. Jesus knew which fish had swallowed the coin, when that fish would be caught on the hook of Peter, and how much that coin was. Everything came to pass just as Jesus had said.

However, this event must not be interpreted as a promise that money will suddenly come to the one who believes. Through the coin in the mouth of the fish, Jesus was not teaching a secret for making believers rich. He was showing the fact that the Son of God knows everything that is needed and can supply it exactly in order to accomplish His own will.

Jesus did not tell Peter to do nothing and only wait for the coin to appear. He told Peter, who had been a fisherman, to go to the sea and cast in a hook. The supply came from the Lord, but Peter had to obey the word of the Lord and act. Faith is not an attitude of doing nothing, but of believing the word of the Lord and moving according to that word.

That Jesus said, *"Give it to them for Me and you,"* means that Jesus prepared even the share of Peter. Peter could not produce his own share by himself, but he could settle his obligation with the one shekel that Jesus prepared. This event reminds us of the grace of the gospel, in which Jesus took on the price of us sinners in our place.

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Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus had no sin, and therefore He was the Son of God who was under no obligation to receive the punishment of sin. However, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus willingly took on all the sins of all mankind in His own body. And by being hanged on the cross in the place of sinners, shedding His blood, and dying, He completely paid the wages of sin that we had to pay.

This does not mean that the one shekel of the temple tax is itself the blood of atonement. However, the picture of Jesus, who had no obligation to pay the tax, preparing the price for Peter shows well the grace of Jesus, who had no sin at all and yet gave Himself for sinners. We cannot pay the wages of our own sin, but Jesus took on the wages of all our sins in our place.

Jesus received our sins onto Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. Therefore the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit is saved from the condemnation of sin and from eternal punishment. It is because Jesus paid all our price.

The one who has received the remission of sin by believing in Jesus becomes a child of God. A child of God no longer needs to pay the price of the law or to establish his own righteousness by religious acts in order to obtain salvation. However, he must not use this freedom for his own greed either. Just as Jesus used His own freedom in love and service, the one who has been saved must also willingly lower himself and serve others for the sake of the gospel.

This word also shows the humility and the wisdom of Jesus. He was the owner of the temple, yet He paid the temple tax; He was the Lord of all things, yet He cared even for the obligation of one man. Jesus did not oppress people with His own authority,

but rather served sinners by laying down His own right. The climax of that service is the baptism and the cross of Jesus.

Therefore this passage is not a word that tells us to receive only the solution of material problems in the world. It is a word of grace, telling us that Jesus the Son of God knows what we need and has paid in our place even the wages of sin that we could not bear. The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not try to prepare his own price in order to obtain salvation but believes in the righteousness that Jesus completed. And as one who has received that grace, he must live thinking of the gospel and the benefit of others before his own right. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 17

[Question] 1. What are the three events in Matthew Chapter 17, and how are they connected to one another?

Matthew Chapter 17 records in order the event on the mountain of transfiguration, the event of healing the demon-possessed boy, and the event of paying the temple tax.

First, on the mountain of transfiguration the appearance of Jesus was gloriously changed, and Moses and Elijah appeared. God the Father made known that Jesus is His beloved Son and the One in whom He is well pleased, and He commanded the disciples to hear His word. By this event it was confirmed that Jesus is the Son of God who fulfills the law and the prophecies of the prophets, and that He is the King of glory.

Second, when Jesus came down from the mountain, He met the demon-possessed boy whom the disciples could not heal. Jesus rebuked the demon and cast it out and healed the boy, and He taught the disciples that they need a faith that believes and relies on the Word and the power of God. The glory and the authority of Jesus that appeared on the mountain of transfiguration were revealed as the actual power that saves a suffering person at the foot of the mountain.

Third, when those who received the temple tax came in Capernaum, Jesus, being the Son of God, originally had no obligation to pay the temple tax, but in order not to cause people to misunderstand, He had Peter obtain one shekel from the

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mouth of a fish and pay the temple tax for the two of them. In this matter Jesus was revealed as One who, though He is the Son of God who rules over all things, lowered Himself so as not to make people stumble.

Among these three events there is a common flow: Jesus is the Son who possesses the glory and the authority of God. On the mountain of transfiguration His divine glory appeared; in healing the demon-possessed boy His power that rules over the authority of Satan appeared; and in the incident of the temple tax His obedience appeared, by which He lowered Himself for people even though He rules over all things. The prediction of His suffering, death, and resurrection recorded in between makes known beforehand that the glorious Son of God would walk the road of suffering of His own will in order to save sinners.

[Question] 2. Matthew 17:1, when was it that Jesus went up on the high mountain?

Jesus went up on the mountain of transfiguration six days after He spoke about the confession of faith of Peter, about His own suffering, death, and resurrection, and about the road of a disciple.

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;" (Matthew 17:1)

Jesus took Peter, James, and John by themselves and went up on a high mountain.

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[Question] 3. Matthew 17:1, who were the three people whom Jesus took by themselves on the way up the high mountain?

The disciples who accompanied Jesus when He went up on the mountain of transfiguration were Peter, James, and John the brother of James.

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;" (Matthew 17:1)

These three were the disciples who, among the twelve disciples of Jesus, were separately chosen to witness the event on the mountain of transfiguration directly.

[Question] 4. Matthew 17:1, which mountain does *"a high mountain"* refer to?

The mountain of transfiguration refers to a high mountain, whose name is not made known, up which Jesus took Peter, James, and John and where He was changed into a glorious appearance.

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;" (Matthew 17:1)

The Bible does not directly record the name of this mountain, so the exact place cannot be determined. There are, however, two representative views.

• Mount Tabor: the place that old Christian tradition has regarded as the mountain of transfiguration.

• Mount Hermon or a mountain near it: many scholars regard this as the more likely place, because it is close to Caesarea

Philippi, the setting of Matthew Chapter 16, and because it is actually a high mountain.

Therefore the exact place name of the mountain of transfiguration cannot be known, but what the passage clearly makes known is the fact that it was a high mountain up which Jesus took the three disciples by themselves. The important point lies not in the name of the mountain but in the fact that there the glory of Jesus and His being the Son of God were revealed.

[Question] 5. Matthew 17:2, how was the appearance of Jesus changed on the mountain?

Jesus was transfigured before the disciples, and His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light.

"And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light." (Matthew 17:2)

This is the event in which the glory of God that had been hidden within Jesus was revealed to the disciples. Jesus is not a mere man but the Christ who possesses the glory and the royal authority of God.

[Question] 6. Matthew 17:3, name the two persons who talked with Jesus.

When Jesus was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Him.

"And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him." (Matthew 17:3)

Moses represents the law, and Elijah represents the prophets.

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The law of the Old Testament and the prophecies of the prophets all point to Jesus Christ and are fulfilled in Him.

[Question] 7. Matthew 17:3, about what work that Jesus would accomplish at Jerusalem did Moses and Elijah speak?

Matthew does not record even the content of the conversation that Moses and Elijah had with Jesus, but Luke, which records the same event, makes known that they spoke of the decease that Jesus was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

"And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:30–31)

Here the "*decease*" of Jesus does not mean simply His departing from the world. Jesus had already received all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He would go to Jerusalem, be nailed to the cross and die, and then rise from the dead and complete the salvation of mankind. Therefore the decease of Jesus refers to the fulfillment of the work of salvation that runs from the baptism He received from John the Baptist to His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Moses represents the law, and Elijah represents the prophets. Also, the ministry of Elijah was continued in the New Testament as the ministry of John the Baptist. As the representative of mankind, John the Baptist baptized Jesus and thereby passed all the sins of the world on to Him, and he bore witness that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Therefore the conversation that Moses and Elijah had with Jesus was a conversation that made known that the salvation

which the law and the prophets had prophesied and borne witness to would be completely fulfilled through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead.

[Question] 8. Matthew 17:4, after Peter said, *"Lord, it is good for us to be here,"* what did he say next?

Peter said that it was good to be there, and he proposed that if Jesus wished, he would make three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'" (Matthew 17:4)

Peter was moved by the glorious sight and wished that the state would continue, but he made a proposal that seemed to put Jesus in the same position as Moses and Elijah. The voice of God that followed clearly made known that Jesus is the beloved Son and that therefore the disciples must hear His word.

[Question] 9. Matthew 17:5, what was the word that came out of the cloud?

Out of the cloud the voice of God was heard, saying that Jesus is the beloved Son of God and the One in whom God is well pleased, and that therefore the disciples must hear the word of Jesus.

"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud,

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saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:5)

This voice is the word by which God Himself bore witness that Jesus is not merely one prophet like Moses or Elijah, but the beloved Son of God. Therefore the disciples had to hear and follow the word of Jesus above that of any other person.

[Question] 10. Matthew 17:5, what does the bright cloud that overshadowed them mean in the Bible?

The *"bright cloud"* on the mountain of transfiguration symbolizes the presence and the glory of God.

"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:5)

In the Old Testament also, the cloud often appeared as a sign that God was present among His own people. On the mountain of transfiguration too, a bright cloud overshadowed the disciples, and the voice of God the Father was heard out of it.

Therefore this cloud indicates the following.

The fact that God was present there; the fact that the glory of God was with Jesus; the testimony of God that Jesus is the Son whom He loves and in whom He is well pleased; and the authoritative command of God that the disciples must hear the word of Jesus

That is, the bright cloud is a sign of the glorious presence by which God Himself confirms the identity and the authority of Jesus.

[Question] 11. Matthew 17:6–8, tell about the reaction of Peter, James, and John when they heard the voice from heaven, and about what happened afterward.

The disciples heard the voice of God that came out of the cloud, fell on the ground, and were greatly afraid.

"And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid." (Matthew 17:6)

Then Jesus came near to the disciples, touched them, and told them to arise and not to be afraid. When the disciples lifted up their eyes, Moses and Elijah were not seen, and only Jesus was there.

"But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only." (Matthew 17:7–8)

Moses represents the law and Elijah represents the prophets, but the center of salvation is Jesus Christ alone. The One whom the disciples must ultimately look to and follow is also Jesus alone.

[Question] 12. Matthew 17:9, what did Jesus tell the disciples not to do as He came down from the mountain?

Jesus charged the disciples not to tell anyone what they had seen on the mountain of transfiguration until the Son of Man was risen from the dead.

"Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'" (Matthew 17:9)

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If only the glory on the mountain of transfiguration became known before the cross and the resurrection of Jesus were accomplished, people could have misunderstood Jesus as a king who would obtain political glory rather than as a Savior who suffers. Therefore the disciples had to keep the secret until the meaning of that vision became clear through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[Question] 13. Matthew 17:10, why did the disciples ask Jesus about the problem that Elijah must come first?

The reason the disciples asked about Elijah is that the scribes, on the basis of the prophecy of the Old Testament, taught that Elijah must come first before the Christ came.

"And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'" (Matthew 17:10)

The word on which they based this is the prophecy of the book of Malachi.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." (Malachi 4:5)

The disciples had a question: Jesus had already come as the Christ, so when had Elijah come first? Also, because they had seen Elijah directly on the mountain of transfiguration, they must have wondered whether that appearance was the fulfillment of the prophecy that the scribes spoke of.

Jesus then said that Elijah had already come but that people did not recognize him, and He taught them that the prophecy had been fulfilled through John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah.

[Question] 14. Matthew 17:11, 12, who is "the Elijah who has already come," and summarize the content of the answer that Jesus gave.

"The Elijah who has already come" of whom Jesus spoke refers to John the Baptist. While acknowledging the word that Elijah would come first and restore all things, Jesus said that this Elijah had already come, but that people did not recognize him and did to him as they wished.

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:11–13)

That Jesus called John the Baptist Elijah does not mean that the Elijah of the Old Testament himself was born again. It is because John the Baptist came with the same power and mission of God as Elijah, turned the people to God, and prepared the way of the Christ who was to come. Just as Elijah cried out to the people of Israel who had fallen into idolatry to return to God, John the Baptist also proclaimed repentance in the wilderness and made the people prepare the way of the Lord.

That he *"will restore all things"* does not mean that John the Baptist would solve all the problems of the world by his own power. It means that, according to the promise of salvation that the law and the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied, he would prepare the way of the Christ, turn the hearts of the people with the Word of God, and carry out the mission of revealing to people the Christ who had come.

As the last prophet of the Old Testament, John the Baptist directly bore witness that Jesus is the promised Christ. He did

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not stop at prophesying the Christ who was to come, but actually met Jesus, who had come into this world, and baptized Him. This was the important mission of John the Baptist that distinguishes him from the other prophets of the Old Testament.

The reason the office of John the Baptist is important in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is that he baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Having fulfilled the righteousness of God in this way, Jesus went toward the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

After baptizing Jesus, John the Baptist bore witness that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Therefore he completed the mission of showing to whom, when, and in what way the sins of sinners were passed on, and of bearing witness that Jesus is the Savior of mankind.

However, the people of that time did not rightly recognize the mission and the authority of John the Baptist. Herod shut John up in prison because John rebuked Herod's sin, and finally Herod beheaded him. That Jesus said people did not recognize Elijah and did to him as they wished refers to exactly this. The martyrdom of John the Baptist was not a failure of faith. He did not bend the Word, and he carried out to the end the mission that God entrusted to him.

Jesus connected the suffering that John the Baptist received with the suffering that He Himself would receive. Just as people did not recognize John the Baptist, whom God had sent, and rejected him, so Jesus the Son of God also would be rejected by the religious leaders and receive the suffering of the cross. However, Jesus received on the cross the judgment for the sin of the world that He had already taken on, and He rose from the dead and completed salvation.

Therefore "the Elijah who has already come" is John the Baptist, and he prepared the way of the Lord, baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind, and bore witness to Him as the Savior who bore the sin of the world. The answer of Jesus is a word that made known that the mission of John the Baptist was an important work of salvation that fulfilled the prophecy of the Old Testament, and that those who rejected him would go on to make Jesus Christ suffer as well.

[Question] 15. Matthew 17:14–20, what event took place when Jesus and His disciples returned to the multitude?

When Jesus and His disciples came down from the mountain of transfiguration and came to the multitude, a man came to Jesus, knelt down before Him, and begged Him to heal his son, who was suffering from severe epilepsy.

That boy was suffering so severely that he often fell into the fire and into the water. The father first brought him to the disciples of Jesus, but the disciples could not heal him.

"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." (Matthew 17:15–16)

Jesus rebuked the faithless and perverse generation and told them to bring the boy to Him. And when He rebuked the demon, the demon came out and the boy was healed at once.

"And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour." (Matthew 17:18)

Therefore, at the foot of the mountain of transfiguration, the event took place in which Jesus healed by His power the demon-

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possessed and suffering boy whom the disciples could not heal.

[Question] 16. Matthew 17:15, explain the illness of the boy and its symptoms.

The boy was suffering severely from epilepsy, and he often fell into the fire and into the water.

"'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water.'" (Matthew 17:15)

The passage describes the symptoms of the boy as epilepsy, and in verse 18 that follows it records that behind that suffering there was a demon, and that when Jesus rebuked the demon and cast it out, the boy was healed.

[Question] 17. Matthew 17:16, what does the fact that the boy was brought to the disciples but they could not heal him show us?

The failure of the disciples teaches that when we carry out the work of the Lord, human experience or ability alone is not sufficient, and that we must fully believe and rely on Jesus.

"So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him." (Matthew 17:16)

Jesus said that the reason the disciples could not cast out the demon was *"Because of your unbelief."* The disciples had previously received the power to cast out demons, but they were not to rely only on the power they had received or on their past experience. They always had to rely on the Lord with a living faith.

Therefore the work of God is not accomplished by human strength and experience, but is accomplished when we believe and rely on the Lord.

[Question] 18. Matthew 17:17, what kind of generation does the *"faithless and perverse generation"* that Jesus spoke of refer to?

The *"faithless and perverse generation"* means people who do not believe the power and the Word of God, and whose hearts have departed from God and go against His will.

"Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.'" (Matthew 17:17)

Here, to be "faithless" is the state of not fully trusting who Jesus is and what His power is, and to be "perverse" means to turn aside from the right way of God and to go against His will. This word can be seen as rebuking not only the multitude of that time but also the spiritual state of the disciples, who could not heal the boy because their faith was insufficient.

[Question] 19. Matthew 17:18, how did Jesus heal the sick boy?

When Jesus rebuked the demon that was tormenting the boy, the demon came out, and from that hour the boy was healed of his illness.

"And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour." (Matthew 17:18)

In this event Jesus cast out the demon by the power of His

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word and healed the boy completely.

[Question] 20. Matthew 17:20, what does the 'faith as a mustard seed' that Jesus spoke of mean?

The faith as a mustard seed that Jesus spoke of does not mean the strong will or the great self-confidence of the one who believes. It means a living faith that, even though it may look small, accepts what God has said as true and entrusts oneself to the God who has spoken.

"So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.'" (Matthew 17:20)

Jesus spoke this word after the disciples could not heal the demon-possessed boy. The disciples had previously received power from Jesus and had the experience of casting out demons, but past experience and office alone could not solve the problem before their eyes. They were not to rely on their own experience and ability but always to believe the word and the power of Jesus.

A mustard seed is very small, but there is life within it. Likewise, what is important about true faith is not how great and strong it looks outwardly, but whether the Word of God is within it. However confidently a person may speak, if its content differs from the Word of God, it is not true faith. On the other hand, even if one feels weak, if he believes what God has done just as the Word says, that faith is a living faith.

Therefore faith as a mustard seed does not mean that if a person creates a strong conviction within his heart he can accomplish whatever he wants. The power of faith does not come from the emotion or the willpower of the one who believes,

but from God, the object of faith. True faith is not using God in order to accomplish one's own will, but entrusting oneself to the will and the Word of God.

The mountain that must first be moved in our hearts is our own thought and our own righteousness. Some people think that they can be saved because they are good and righteous, and some conclude that they cannot be saved because they are too wicked. Both thoughts are unbelief that puts one's own judgment ahead of the Word of God. Faith is laying down both one's own righteousness and one's own despair and accepting the salvation that the Lord has accomplished just as it is.

The faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit is exactly this kind of living faith. Jesus received all the sins of the world—past, present, and future—passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross and received the judgment of sin, and He rose from the dead and completed salvation. The one who believes this word in his heart can hold on to the promise of God that all his sins have been remitted, even when his own feelings waver.

Satan tries to condemn a person continually by making him see only his own weakness and the fact that he has sinned. However, if he holds on to the word that Jesus took on all his sins and finished even the judgment, then even with faith as small as a mustard seed he can cross over the great mountain of sin and condemnation and come boldly before God. The feelings of the one who believes may change, but the word that his sins passed on to Jesus and that their judgment is finished does not change.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, mountains such as fear, anxiety, laziness, and pride that block the preaching of the gospel can appear. If we try to move such mountains by our own

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resolve alone, we become weary. However, when we continue to hear the Word of God, unite with the church, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Lord accomplishes the work of the gospel through the one who believes.

Therefore faith as a mustard seed is not boasting of the size of one's own faith, but a faith that acknowledges one's own inability and fully relies on Jesus and on the word of the salvation that He accomplished. This faith not only enables us to cross over the mountain of sin and condemnation and be saved, but also enables the one who has been saved to preach the gospel and to live accomplishing the will of God even in the midst of difficulties.

[Question] 21. Matthew 17:22, 23, what point in time does *"while they were staying in Galilee"* refer to?

"While they were staying in Galilee" refers to the time when, after Jesus came down from the mountain of transfiguration and healed the demon-possessed boy, He was staying and gathered together with His disciples in the region of Galilee. It is the time just before He arrived in Capernaum.

"Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful." (Matthew 17:22–23)

At this time Jesus predicted again to His disciples that He would be betrayed into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise on the third day.

[Question] 22. Matthew 17:24, what kind of money is "*the half-shekel*"?

"*The half-shekel*" refers to the temple tax that the Jewish men of that time paid for the upkeep of the temple and for the cost of the sacrifices.

"*when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the half-shekel came to Peter, and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekel–ASV?'" (Matthew 17:24)*

Its basis appears in Exodus 30:13.

"This is what everyone among those who are numbered shall give: half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary (a shekel is twenty gerahs). The half-shekel shall be an offering to the LORD." (Exodus 30:13)

Therefore half a shekel is equivalent to ten gerahs, and in Matthew Chapter 17 it means the tax offered to the temple. Those who collected the half shekel asked Peter whether Jesus also paid this tax.

[Question] 23. Matthew 17:25, what are the customs and taxes that Jesus mentioned in connection with the temple tax?

"*Customs*" refers to a tax imposed on the movement and the trade of goods or merchandise, and "*taxes*" means a general levy or tribute imposed on persons or property.

"He said, 'Yes.' And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?'" (Matthew 17:25)

Jesus gave as an illustration the fact that a king of the world

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takes taxes not from his own son but from other people. It means that Jesus, the Son of God, originally has no obligation to pay a tax for the temple of God. However, in order not to cause people to misunderstand or to stumble, He paid the temple tax for Peter and for Himself. Jesus thought first of the benefit of others rather than asserting His own right.

[Question] 24. Matthew 17:26, 27, why did Jesus, who had no obligation to pay the temple tax, nevertheless pay it?

Because Jesus is the Son of God, He originally had no obligation to pay a tax for the temple of God. However, He paid it willingly, lest His not paying it should cause people to misunderstand or stumble.

"Peter said to Him, 'From strangers.' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.'" (Matthew 17:26–27)

Rather than asserting His own right, Jesus willingly laid it down in order to prevent the misunderstanding and the stumbling of others. At the same time, by providing the temple tax from the mouth of a fish, He revealed His power that rules over all things.

[Question] 25. Matthew 17:27, how did Jesus provide the temple tax for Himself and for Peter?

Jesus told Peter to go to the sea and cast in a hook. And He said that when he opened the mouth of the fish that was caught first there would be one shekel, and that he should take it and pay it as the temple tax for the two of them, Jesus and Peter.

"Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you." (Matthew 17:27)

The temple tax of half a shekel each was needed for two people, and so He had the temple tax for Jesus and for Peter paid together with the one shekel obtained from the mouth of the fish. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Hear only the word of Jesus

< Matthew 17:1-13 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."

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The true nature of the Lord revealed in glory

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. There the face of the Lord shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. Jesus is not one among outstanding teachers or prophets; He is God from the beginning, and He is the Son of God who was clothed in the body of a man and came in order to save us. Within the lowly and ordinary appearance of Jesus that the disciples usually saw, such divine glory had been hidden.

In Matthew Chapter 16 Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The event on the mountain of transfiguration confirmed that this confession was not human conjecture but the truth that God made known. In days to come the disciples would see the cross of the Lord, and they would also receive persecution from the world. God clearly showed them who Jesus is, so that they would not be shaken even in the midst of suffering.

Our faith also must not be built on the outward appearance of Jesus or on the benefits we obtain in the world. Jesus is God who created the heavens and the earth, and He is the Savior who was clothed in the flesh and came in order to save sinners. When we believe this fact in our hearts, we can hold on to His word without denying the Lord even when our circumstances become difficult.

There is also a meaning in the fact that Jesus did not take all the disciples but took Peter, James, and John by themselves and went up. These men were later to stand as important witnesses of the church. The Jesus to whom they would bear witness was not one man who died powerlessly under the punishment of Rome, but the Creator who possesses the glory of heaven. The disciples could be discouraged if they saw only the shame of

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the cross, but if they remembered the glory that was revealed on the mountain, they could know that His death was not defeat but a voluntary sacrifice to give life to sinners. Here also lies the reason He told them to speak of this sight only after His resurrection. If only the glory of the transfiguration were proclaimed apart from His death and resurrection, people could think of Jesus merely as a mysterious being who performs signs. However, when it is seen in the light of the cross and the resurrection, the mountain of transfiguration becomes an event that confirms who the Savior is.

Faith does not grow strong by seeing many amazing scenes. Even though the disciples saw the majestic sight on the mountain of transfiguration, they soon revealed their own inability at the foot of the mountain. Human memory and emotion grow weak as time passes. Therefore God did not tell the disciples to hold on to their emotion but told them to hear the word of His Son. The root of faith is not experience but the Word. When we hear the Word, we rightly know the identity and the work of Jesus, and we do not miss the promise of salvation even in the midst of suffering.

The salvation to which the law and the prophets pointed

On the mountain of transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses represents the law and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. Through Moses God made clear what sin is, and He taught the law by which a sinner laid his hands on a sacrificial offering, passed his sins on to it, and was atoned for by its blood. The law reveals that a person cannot make himself righteous, and it points to the fact

that a perfect sacrificial offering to bear sin is absolutely necessary.

Elijah was a prophet who turned the hearts of a people inclined toward idols back to God. However, Jesus said that the Elijah who was to come had already come, and the disciples realized that this word referred to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was entrusted with the mission of preparing the way of the Lord, turning the people to God, and baptizing Jesus so that the righteousness of God would be fulfilled.

Peter was moved and said that he would make three tabernacles, for Jesus and for Moses and for Elijah. However, before he had finished speaking, God said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"* Moses and Elijah are servants who were preciously used, but they are not the Savior. All the testimony of the law and the prophets gathers into Jesus Christ. Therefore we must not place human authority or religious tradition in the same position as the word of Jesus.

When the disciples lifted up their eyes again, only Jesus was seen. This is the conclusion of faith. When we read the law we must see Jesus, and when we examine the ministry of the prophets we must see the salvation that Jesus accomplished. Even if we know much of the Bible and our religious zeal is great, if we miss the righteousness that Jesus accomplished we cannot escape from sin.

That God said, *"Hear Him!"* also means that our salvation does not come out of human thought or experience. Some people make a deeply moving experience the ground of their faith, and some regard long service as righteousness. However, emotions change, and deeds reveal their insufficiency. The ground that does not change is only the salvation that Jesus accomplished according to His word. The faith in which God is well pleased is not a faith that finds something righteous within

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oneself, but a faith that accepts just as it is the righteousness that His beloved Son completed.

The law given through Moses clearly reveals the sin of a person. If we examine ourselves honestly before the law, no one can say that he is righteous before God by his own deeds. The law is not a human ladder that saves a sinner, but a mirror that makes us realize that we absolutely need a Savior. At the same time, through the tabernacle and the sacrificial system God also showed beforehand how sin is atoned for. A sinner laid his hands on a spotless offering and passed his sins on to it, and that offering shed its blood in the place of the sinner. The process by which sin passed over and the judgment of that sin were not separated from each other.

This principle is also important for understanding the salvation of the New Testament. The cross of Jesus is not an event in which One who bore no sin at all died without cause. First the sins of mankind had to be moved onto Jesus by the method that God appointed, and after that Jesus had to pay the wages of those sins. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament points beforehand to this righteousness of God. That Moses appeared on the mountain of transfiguration was not in order to exalt the law itself alongside Jesus, but confirms that all the types of the law and of the sacrifices were completed in Jesus.

Elijah also was not a man who cried out that people should believe in him. He was used in the work of turning the hearts of a people that had been taken away by idols back to God. A true servant of God does not bind people to himself but turns them to God. The mission of Elijah is continued in the mission of John the Baptist. John the Baptist also rebuked the sins of people and cried out for true repentance, and at last he was used in the work of revealing the Savior and passing the sins of

mankind on to Him. The law of sacrifice of Moses and the work of restoration of Elijah meet as one in the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and in the cross.

The baptism that fulfills all righteousness

Jesus Himself made known that the Elijah who was to come is John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias the priest, and his mother Elizabeth also was a descendant of Aaron. He was not merely a preacher in the wilderness who cried out for repentance, but a man entrusted with an office in the history of salvation, to baptize Jesus as the representative of all mankind.

On the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament, the high priest laid both hands on the head of the live goat and passed all the sins of the people of Israel on to it. The sacrificial offering bore those sins and was cast out, and so accomplished the atonement of the people. The event in which this type was fulfilled in the New Testament is the very baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist. Jesus said to John the Baptist, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* Of Jesus, who took on all the sins of the world through this baptism received from John the Baptist, John the Baptist afterward bore witness, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

When Jesus said that Elijah had already come, the disciples realized that this word referred to John the Baptist. This does not mean that John the Baptist was the same person as the Elijah of the Old Testament born again, but that he came with the same mission of restoration that had been entrusted to Elijah. Just as Malachi promised, he turned the hearts of people

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who had departed from God back to God and prepared the way of the Savior. And as the representative of mankind, he baptized Jesus and thereby opened the way for reconciliation between God and sinners.

If we reduce the office of John the Baptist to merely sprinkling water on people, we also lose the meaning that the baptism of Jesus has. Jesus did not receive the baptism of repentance because He had sin. The sinless Son of God received baptism from John the Baptist in order to receive and take on all the sins of sinners. This was the fitting work that fulfills all righteousness. The righteousness of God does not lie in closing His eyes to sin as though it did not exist. It lies in passing sin on to Jesus and in Jesus receiving the judgment of that sin in our place, so that love and justice are fulfilled together.

After his mission was finished, John the Baptist did not try to exalt himself. He bore witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and then he stepped back. Though he was treated as people wished and suffered martyrdom, his mission did not fail. Jesus Himself made known that he is the Elijah who was to come. Therefore we must avoid both exalting John the Baptist as though he were the Savior and disregarding his office in the history of salvation. The Savior is Jesus alone, and John the Baptist is a servant who was used in the work of passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus according to the method that God appointed.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the water refers to the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist. The blood refers to the death by which Jesus bore the sin of the world that He took on through the baptism received from John the Baptist and was judged on the cross. The Holy Spirit bears

witness that all this salvation is the truth that God established and accomplished. Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He shed His blood on the cross and received the punishment for those sins, and He rose from the dead. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that makes a sinner righteous once and for all.

If a person thinks only of the blood of the cross and yet cannot believe when and how sin passed over to Jesus, sin still remains in his heart. However, if he believes the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection as one complete salvation, he comes to rely not on his own feelings or deeds but on the righteousness of God. The remission of sin is not the human labor of washing away one's own sins day by day, but the grace of receiving by faith the salvation that Jesus has already completed.

The Holy Spirit is not One who comes upon a person as a reward for human effort while he keeps sin in his heart and only adds religious zeal. When we first hear the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin by believing that Jesus removed all sin, the Holy Spirit dwells in that cleansed heart as the gift of God. The one who has received the Holy Spirit makes the written Word, rather than a special feeling, the sure evidence of his salvation, and even in his own weakness he calls God Father and serves the gospel.

People easily think that in order to receive the Holy Spirit they must fast for a long time, pray with a loud voice, and have a special experience. However, the Holy Spirit is not One who is drawn by zeal that people produce. The Holy Spirit is God who bears witness to the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. Therefore, if a person regards emotional

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excitement as the presence of the Holy Spirit while sin is in his heart, the ground of his salvation is shaken. He must first acknowledge before the Word that he is a sinner, and believe that Jesus took on all those sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and received the judgment in full on the cross. The Holy Spirit dwells in the clean heart that has received the remission of sin by this faith.

Even a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells can be insufficient and make mistakes in the flesh. However, whenever he discovers his own faults, he does not try to obtain salvation again. He honestly acknowledges his faults before God and turns from them, but he does not try to wash away with his own tears the sins that have already passed over to Jesus. The Holy Spirit reminds him of the word that Jesus took on even those sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the cross. Therefore the one who believes neither treats sin lightly by using his insufficiency as an excuse, nor throws away the assurance of salvation because of his insufficiency. Rather, he gives thanks for the grace that saved him completely and follows the Lord more honestly.

Such a good conscience is not a conscience that insists that it has no fault. It is a conscience that believes that although its flesh is weak, Jesus has cleansed all its sins. Even when there are times of shame in looking at one’s own deeds, when he looks at the word of salvation he can come boldly before God. Through this faith the Holy Spirit gives the one who believes joy, thanksgiving, and strength to serve the gospel. Assurance that people make collapses according to circumstances, but assurance built on the righteousness that Jesus accomplished holds the one who believes even in the midst of tribulation and persecution.

The Savior who takes away fear

The disciples who heard the voice from heaven fell down and were greatly afraid. The fear that a sinner feels before the holy God is natural. However, Jesus came near to them, touched them, and told them to arise and not be afraid. The reason a sinner can stand boldly before God is not that he has become good, but that Jesus took on all his sins and received the judgment.

As He came down from the mountain, Jesus spoke of His own death and resurrection. The glory on the mountain of transfiguration was not a glory for avoiding suffering. The Lord is originally the God of glory, but He walked the road of suffering in order to give life to sinners. John the Baptist also, after finishing his mission, was treated as people wished, and Jesus too suffered at the hands of the world. Nevertheless the plan of salvation of God did not fail. Rather, through their ministry the way of the remission of sin was fully opened.

The restoration that God accomplished does not mean merely that a person's life becomes a little better. The fundamental restoration is that a person who had become an enemy of God because of sin receives the remission of sin and becomes a child of God. Because Jesus took on sin through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid its price on the cross, the one who believes is no longer under the wrath of God but has been reconciled with Him. If sin remains in the heart, no matter how religiously devout a person may look, he cannot enjoy true peace before God. However, when sin is removed by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we no longer see God only as a fearful judge but serve Him as a Father of love.

This gospel of restoration must be proclaimed to the world

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through the church. Just as John the Baptist did not make it his aim to gather people to himself but pointed to Jesus, a worker of the gospel also must not bind people to his own knowledge or character. He must bear witness only to the fact that Jesus completely saved sinners through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection. The work of preaching this gospel requires the service of time, heart, and material things. Yet that labor is not the merit that saves us. It is the fruit by which one who has already been saved gives thanks for the grace he received and serves so that other souls also may be reconciled with God.

Continuing to hear the Word is also important. If, after receiving the remission of sin, we live only according to our own thoughts, the anxieties and desires of the world easily cover the heart. When we hear the Word and share fellowship within the church, our stubborn thoughts are broken and our faith grows. The Word removes the stones that exalt oneself, cuts away the thorns of anxiety about the future, and makes a good field of the heart for serving the gospel. The one who believes is not a person who is strong alone, but a person who grows within the Word and the church and shares the food of life with others.

What we need today is not to seek a new sign but to hear the word that the Son of God has spoken. We must believe the word that Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection. In the heart of the person who has this faith there is the remission of sin, and the Holy Spirit dwells there. We must look to Jesus alone and preach this precious gospel to those who are still under sin. Through this word God turns the hearts of people to Himself, and He raises up the sinner who has fallen down in fear and

makes him live as His own child.

On the mountain of transfiguration the One who remained at the last in the eyes of the disciples was Jesus alone. This is the conclusion that the first part of Matthew Chapter 17 gives us. The law points to Jesus, and the promise of the prophets also prepares for the salvation that Jesus would accomplish. The office of John the Baptist likewise has its purpose in passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus and bearing witness to Him. Therefore we must go beyond human authority, religious custom, and our own feelings, and hear only the word of Jesus.

If we believe that word, even a person who has fallen down in fear can rise. We do not stand before God because our own good deeds are sufficient. We rise because Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, because He received all the judgment through the blood of the cross, and because by rising again He became the perfect Savior. The person who receives the Holy Spirit within this faith and is reconciled with God does not remain looking only at the glory of the mountain of transfiguration. He goes down to the foot of the mountain, meets souls pressed down by sin, preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and gives himself so that the will of God may be accomplished. The Lord will hold such a person and at last will make him share in the glorious resurrection. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The righteous John the Baptist

< Matthew 17:1-13 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."

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The parable of the four kinds of soil

If we do not hear the Word of God, our faith has no strength even though we have received the remission of sin. It is not easy to live by faith even when we keep hearing the Word, so if we do not hear the Word we are no different from a person who is barely holding on to life. It is like someone who does not breathe on his own but gasps for breath depending on an oxygen mask, and dies as soon as it is taken off. We must become people whose faith grows so that we can also influence others and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Only when we grow into people of faith who do not merely eat and live alone but also feed this food to others and lead them can we be called true fruit before the Lord.

Jesus spoke of four kinds of soil in the parable of the sower. Among them the wayside soil, the stony soil, and the thorny soil all died, and only the good soil bore fruit. But where is there soil that is good from the beginning? It must be plowed up, the stones must be picked out, the gravel must be taken out, the hardened ground must be dug and broken up, and the clods must be crushed. Only then does it become a field of the heart that absorbs water well when the rain falls and in which a seed can grow well when it is planted. Therefore do not think that anyone is good soil from the beginning. It is by hearing the Word of God much that the field of one's heart is plowed and becomes good soil.

The wayside soil is a field that everyone passes over and treads down. A person who says that this religion is fine and that religion is fine also does not have the gospel of truth planted in his heart even when it falls there. Someone comes along and says, "What a good thing you have here," and takes it away. At a certain hospital a person in charge received one of

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our books, but he had no particular interest and put it on his bookshelf. Then a doctor came, saw the book, and asked whether there was a book with such a title and where it had come from. When he was told the story, the doctor said that if the other man was not going to read it, he would like to read it, and he took it away. That is what the wayside soil is like. Even when it is put on a shelf, its value is not known, and when someone else comes and picks it up, that is the end of it.

The stony soil is a gravel field. What is exposed on the surface may look small, but large stones are buried underneath. With an iceberg also, only a little is exposed above the water, but beneath it there is a mass of ice larger than a building. All such things must be dug out. With what are they dug out? They must be pointed out by the Word of God and dug out by the surgery of the Word of God. Only when they are all dug out does the stony soil become gravel soil, and gravel soil become fertile soil. We must pick out the things that are not good in the field of my heart and yours in this way.

The thorny soil is a heart full of the anxieties of the world. It is a heart that, having no faith to believe the Word of God, cannot believe the word that says, *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'" (Matthew 6:31)*, and worries about what it will eat, what it will drink, and what it will wear. Even when a good seed is planted, the thorns grow much larger, make a shadow, and block out all the sunlight. If a person does not believe the Word of God, he dies because of anxiety. Not knowing that he is a child of God, not believing that God cares for him, and not believing what the Word says, he worries and dies.

However, even a person who cannot cut away the thorns by himself, if he comes out to the church of God and hears the

Word, faith arises while he hears the Word, and by that faith he can cut away the anxieties around him. He comes to say that this was not something to worry about and that he worried needlessly. In that way the thorny soil is put in order and becomes good soil. Even a righteous person who has received the remission of sin, if he does not come out to the church of God and hear the Word, will have nothing left in his heart but anxiety. Our gathering together to hear the Word is not a form or a ritual. We gather like this in order to hear the Word of God and live, to become instruments of righteousness, and to receive the blessing of God.

Moses and Elijah, who met Jesus on the mountain of transfiguration

The word we read today is Matthew 17:1 through 13. Looking here, Jesus took the three disciples Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. And there a very rare thing happened. Moses and Elijah came down from heaven, and the clothes of Jesus turned white and even His appearance was completely changed. He was changed like God, like a divine being. Jesus talked with Moses and Elijah. What they talked about is not recorded, so we do not know.

Peter, who saw that sight, was overjoyed. So he asked to be allowed to make three tabernacles. He wanted to make one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, and to live there beside them. It was a story like a dream.

At that moment a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them, and a voice came out of it. It was the voice saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5)*. They had gone up the mountain with Jesus,

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and at the top of the mountain Jesus was suddenly changed, Moses and Elijah came down from heaven and talked with Him, a cloud covered them, and even such a voice was heard—how mysterious a scene that must have been! Why did God show such a scene to the disciples?

Verse 2 says, *"and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2)*. The Bible says, *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43)*. Even the light of a fluorescent lamp stings the eyes if we stare at it for a while, but from the face of Jesus light shone like the sun. I believe that when the Lord comes again and we are raised and caught up, we will also be changed like this. I believe that this is why Jesus went up on the mountain and showed this appearance to His disciples.

John the Baptist, the Elijah who was to come

As Jesus came down from the mountain with His disciples, He commanded them, saying, *"Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead" (Matthew 17:9)*. Then the disciples asked Jesus, *"Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Matthew 17:10)*. Jesus answered and said, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:11–12)*. And it says, *"Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (Matthew 17:13)*.

The scribes were the people who wrote the Scriptures and copied the manuscripts. They said that if everything the Lord

had prophesied in the Old Testament was to be fulfilled in the New Testament, Elijah must certainly come first. They said that only when Elijah came would all things be restored. What is that restoration? Man was driven out of the garden of Eden because of sin and thereby became a sinner, and in the Old Testament God said that He would send the Messiah and save them. That the word of that prophecy would be fulfilled, and that man would be saved from sin and become the people of God—that is restoration. But since it was said that Elijah must come for that restoration to be accomplished, the disciples asked what this meant. Jesus answered that Elijah had already come, but that people did not know him and treated him as they pleased.

John the Baptist is the very Elijah whom God said in the book of Malachi in the Old Testament that He would send. Look at Malachi chapter 4, the last book of the Old Testament. It says, *"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble" (Malachi 4:1),* and then it says, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).*

In this way, as God brought the Old Testament to a close, He said that before the last days came He would send His servant Elijah the prophet. Then what does that Elijah do when he comes? It says, *"And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6).* This is exactly the work that the high priest does. The high priest offers a sacrifice before God and plays the role of a mediator who changes the heart of God's wrath toward the people into a heart of mercy, that is, into a heart that

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has pity on this people. He also does the work of turning the hearts of the people who have departed from God back to God. This is the work of the high priest, who offers sacrifice between God and man. God said that He would send Elijah the prophet to do that work.

When did He say He would send him? He said that He would send him in the last days, when judgment was at hand. And He said that if this is not believed, *"Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6)*. Elijah comes and plays the role of a mediator who leads the hearts of people to God and leads the heart of God to the people; but if the people do not listen to his word and do not turn their hearts to God, God will come and sweep away that land like a burning oven. Therefore, in the word we read today, this scene in which Jesus met Moses and Elijah face to face on the mountain of transfiguration and talked with them has an absolute relationship with our salvation.

Moses is the representative of the law. Moses received the law before God, and he also received the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle by which the people could receive the remission of sin. That is why the five books of Moses are absolute. What is contained in these five books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy? They contain the law of God that God gave through Moses to the people of Israel and to all mankind, the prophecy that Jesus Christ would come to this earth and save them, and the truth that all people receive the remission of sin through the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle. They say that Jesus Christ would come to this earth exactly according to the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle and remove the sins of the people once and for all. God spoke all of this through Moses.

And what do the remaining books, from Joshua to Malachi,

speak of? They record such things as keeping the law of God, and being disciplined for not keeping it and serving idols, and then repenting. So the five books of Moses become the absolute foundation of the Bible. Then what about Elijah? Elijah is a servant of God who led the people of Israel before God and showed them that the LORD God is the true God. And that Elijah is John the Baptist. In Matthew 11:14 Jesus said, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14).*

Matthew 11:11 and 12 say 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. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:11–12).* Why does the kingdom of heaven suffer violence from the days of John the Baptist? It is because John the Baptist baptized Jesus and thereby passed all the sins of mankind on to Him. Therefore those who believe the fact that my sins all passed over to Jesus through John the Baptist are taking the kingdom of heaven by force. They enter the kingdom of heaven by faith, and they obtain salvation by faith.

John the Baptist, that is, Elijah, is one who is indispensable in our salvation. Why must Elijah come? It is because, as the representative of mankind, he baptized Jesus and thereby transferred the sins of all people to Him, so that all people could come before God. It is because he passed the sins of the people on to Jesus and offered the sacrifice. In Luke chapter 1 also, when John the Baptist was born, his father prophesied, saying, *"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a*

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people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

Therefore the completion of our salvation is like this. We could not keep all the law that God spoke through Moses and so had to die, but Jesus Christ the Son of God came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist and had all our sins transferred on to Him, bore that sin of the world and was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and thereby saved us. For this reason Moses and Elijah are absolutely necessary for my salvation and yours, for the completion and the restoration of our salvation. That is why Jesus called Moses and Elijah and talked with them. When the disciples asked what it meant that Elijah must come first for all things to be restored, Jesus said that Elijah had already come but that they did not believe him and treated him as they pleased, and that he was the very John who baptized Him.

"The baptism of John—where was it from?"

However, people do not believe that John the Baptist. They do not believe the work that John the Baptist did. In Matthew chapter 21 also, the word concerning John the Baptist continues to appear. *"Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the*

multitude, for all count John as a prophet.' So they answered Jesus and said, 'We do not know.' And He said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." (Matthew 21:23–27)

Look here. Jesus went into the temple and taught the people. Then the chief priests and the elders of the people of that time came out and challenged Him, rebuking Him and asking by what authority He came out into the temple of God and taught people, and who had given Him such authority. In Israel there was a system of teachers called rabbis, and no one who was not such a teacher could dare to stand in that place and teach. So they demanded to know whether He had received it from the chief priests, or from the elders, or how He dared to teach people without having received it at all. Jesus did not answer that directly, but said that He would first ask one thing, and that if they answered, He also would answer.

Then Jesus asked the chief priests and the elders. He asked, *"The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?" (Matthew 21:25)*. John baptized people and also baptized Jesus, and He was asking whether they had permitted that baptism, whether they had given the authority, or whether God had given the authority. They thought that if they said it was from heaven, He would ask why then they had not believed him, and that if they said it was from men, they feared the people, who regarded John as a servant of God. So they answered that they did not know. Then Jesus also said that neither would He tell them by what authority He did these things.

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The role of John the Baptist

Jesus gave one more parable. A certain man had two sons, and when the father told the elder son to go and work in the vineyard, he answered that he would go but did not go; and when he told the second son to go and work, he first said he would not go, but afterward he regretted it and went and worked. When He asked which of them had done the will of his father, the people answered that it was the son who had refused at first but afterward regretted it and went. Then Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:31–32).* Thus He rebuked them.

What did Jesus say when He bore witness concerning John? He said that John came in the way of righteousness. He said that John came to this earth for the right work that makes people righteous, that is, the work that lets them receive the remission of sin, and that he baptized people and baptized Jesus. He rebuked them, asking why, when John had done this right work, they did not believe that work by which God the Father sent John the Baptist and removed the sins of all people—why they did not believe the baptism of John. That is why Jesus said that tax collectors and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.

The tax collectors and the harlots believed. The people of that time who collected taxes and took away what belonged to the people, the people who were treated as sinners, believed that John the Baptist was a servant of God, and they believed that John the Baptist baptizing Jesus was the transferring of all

the sins of the people on to Jesus and the washing away of all their sins. Then what is the baptism of John? The word baptism means to be washed. That John baptized Jesus is the same as the laying on of hands in the Old Testament. Just as sin passes over when hands are laid on in the Old Testament, all the sins of mankind passed over to Jesus when John the Baptist laid his hands on the head of Jesus and baptized Him. This system of the laying on of hands was appointed by God, and so it works just as it is, apart from whether one believes it or not. If a person puts his head before someone possessed by an evil spirit and receives the laying on of hands, that spirit passes over to him.

It is the same in a place where people receive tongues. If a person who already speaks in tongues lays his hands on another person's head, presses down, and prays, the spirit passes over. So the one it passed over to suddenly falls backward, speaks in tongues, makes a commotion, and even rolls on the ground. It is that an evil spirit has invaded even that person. The word baptism uses the character meaning to wash. It means to wash our sins. The baptism that John gave to people was the baptism of repentance, telling them to wash away the sins they had committed, and the baptism that John gave to Jesus was the baptism that transferred all the sins of all mankind to Jesus, that is, the baptism that washed away the sins of all people.

The word baptism has three meanings. The first is to be washed, the second is to be buried, and the third is to be passed over. What must happen for our sins to be washed away? Only when John the Baptist laid his hands on Jesus and all the sins of mankind passed over to Jesus are our sins washed away. Then what happens to Jesus, who had all those sins transferred to Him? He must be buried. That is why Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him,

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and just as it was said, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29),* He bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the cross in our place, shed His blood and died, was buried in the tomb, and rose from the dead. Yet the people of that time did not believe this baptism of John. Jesus rebuked them, saying that John came to this earth in the way of righteousness, and that tax collectors and harlots believed him, but that they saw it and did not afterward relent and believe.

Just as it is recorded in the book of Malachi, before God comes in fierce wrath on the last day, He said, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children" (Malachi 4:5–6).* How did he turn them? He did so by himself, as the representative of mankind, as the greatest among those born of women, baptizing Jesus—the Son of God and our Savior—and thereby transferring all sins to Him. He caused the wrath of God toward this people to come down upon Jesus Christ the Son of God, and he passed on to Jesus the sins of all people who could not come before God because they had sin. Thus, through faith in that Savior—who received baptism from John, had the sin of the world transferred to Him and took it on, was judged in our place on the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead—mankind became able to come before God. God has mercy on those who believe in Jesus Christ and believe the work that John the Baptist did, and He makes them the children of God. In this way John the Baptist played the role of a mediator.

We must believe the Word of God, not the commandments of men

John the Baptist is the last priest of the Old Testament who played this role of a mediator. As Moses said, God appointed the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle and established the system of the high priest so that the people of Israel would offer sacrifices by the principle of representation, and that last priest is John the Baptist, the representative of mankind and the greatest among those born of women. That is why it was said, *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12)*. Some people ask where in the Bible it says that John the Baptist is the last priest of the Old Testament. Let us suppose that there is no such statement. However, God said that He would send Elijah, and Jesus Himself said that this Elijah is John the Baptist. Then what is this work of Elijah coming and turning the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers? It is offering the sacrifice on their behalf.

In the Old Testament a sacrificial offering was brought and the sacrifice was offered, but now that offering has changed. The Son of God became the sacrificial offering. The sins of mankind were transferred to the Son of God. Jesus had all the sins of mankind entirely transferred to Him through the baptism that John the Baptist gave. Therefore God has made completely sinless all those who believe the work that John the Baptist did and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him through John the Baptist and removed sin, and those who believe the salvation that the Lord gave. John came in the way of righteousness, and in this way He made them sinless. Yet

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today, no matter how loudly we cry out that sin passed over through John the Baptist, people do not believe.

Who is it that Jesus most acknowledges in the Bible? It is John the Baptist. The one most highly regarded in the New Testament is not Peter and not any apostle, but John the Baptist. The one whom Jesus Himself recognizes is John the Baptist. Jesus had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him and took them on through John the Baptist. He did not say that He would take them on by Himself in His own way. Just as in the Old Testament the high priest had to pass the sins of the people of Israel on to the sacrificial offering, so also Jesus came to this earth as the Lamb of God, as the sacrificial offering, received baptism from John and had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him, bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose from the dead. Even though this is so clear, people do not believe.

The religious leaders of that time, the representatives of the law of the nation of Israel, the people called the most senior, came before Jesus and did not believe the work that John did but rather opposed the work that John the Baptist did. So Jesus said that they, being full of their own righteousness and not believing, would go to hell, and that the harlots, who were treated as sinners at that time, believed instead. By believing this, they obtained the righteousness of God and were saved before God. Yet even today people do not believe this.

When Jesus was on this earth, the Pharisees and the scribes came to Him from Jerusalem and demanded to know why His disciples did not keep the tradition of the elders. They said that when eating food one must wash even up to the elbows, but His disciples ate without even washing their hands. And they mocked Him, saying that judging by such disciples He too was a worthless man who did not keep the law. Then Jesus rebuked

them. He said, *"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man" (Matthew 15:11)*. It is the word that the evil thoughts that come out of a person's heart defile him. It is the word that a person is not defiled because he ate food without washing his hands.

Jesus also rebuked them in this way: *"But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"— then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:5–6)*. They say that they keep the law, but instead they change the commandment of God into the commandment of men and believe in God with that. So He said, *"And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9)*. And He said this: *"And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch" (Matthew 15:14)*.

The tradition of the elders is doctrine that people made. They say that one must attend a large church, that one must attend an officially registered church, that one must attend a church with clearly established doctrine, that one must attend a church whose denomination is large and which the people of the world acknowledge, and that one must believe in God as such a church teaches. However, if we believe in God and revere Him by the commandments of men, that faith becomes empty.

No matter how much we teach with the teachings of men, it is of no use. What did God say—this is what is important. They say that a certain theologian said this and a certain reformer said that, that a certain philosopher and thinker said this and a certain great man believed and lived like this. If we teach that way, learn that way, and act that way, it is all void. What does the Bible say? The Old Testament speaks like this and the New

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Testament speaks like that; Jesus speaks like this concerning John the Baptist and says that our sins passed over like this and speaks of the law of sacrifice like this—so we must teach it just so and believe it just so. That is hearing and believing the commandment of God and being saved, and honoring God according to that word is worshiping God.

Those who believe the work that John the Baptist did obtain salvation

People say that John the Baptist failed. They say that because he spoke rightly to King Herod and was beheaded and died, he failed. But dear brothers and sisters, if John the Baptist failed, then Jesus also failed and God also failed. In order to remove the sins of our mankind, God sent John the Baptist to this earth six months ahead of Jesus, and after that He sent Jesus to this earth.

In the Old Testament, through Moses, God spoke the law to fallen mankind, spoke the law of sacrifice, and spoke the 613 statutes and commandments that people were to keep. In them are contained the law of sacrifice, the law of salvation, and the law of judgment as well. And God said that He would send Elijah, and He sent him just as He said. He sent Elijah and sent Jesus to this earth, and He determined to transfer all the sins of mankind to Jesus through Elijah. Jesus had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him through Elijah, and Elijah transferred all the sins of mankind to Him.

That is why Jesus said, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. He said that it is fitting to make all people sinless and to save them from all sin. Even though God the Father removed all the sins of mankind in this

way through John the Baptist and through Jesus, people do not believe this. In the New Testament age people did not acknowledge John the Baptist, and they do not acknowledge him now either.

A certain missionary also showed a reaction of refusal when he first saw our book. He wrote back that the statement that John the Baptist passed sin on to Jesus was too exaggerated to accept, and that he could not agree. But after reading a little more, he said this: I will now proclaim the holy news. I also agree with that part about sin passing over to Jesus through John the Baptist. My sins also passed over. Now I have no sin. He agreed of his own accord.

Many people in other countries agree like this. They say that they have believed for a long time but that this gospel is the first of its kind. They say that it is the first such book they have encountered in the history of Christianity. And they acknowledge the work that John the Baptist did, that is, the work of transferring the sin of the world to Jesus. They accept in their hearts that Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose from the dead. Even those who at first say it is exaggerated accept it just as it is when we speak to them from the Bible. Even now countless people are hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit like this and being born again.

Everyone agrees that He was nailed to the cross. All mankind agrees, and even the devil agrees, that Jesus bore the cross because of our sins. But that alone is not enough. All the people of the world must believe that baptism of righteousness that John gave to Jesus, that way of righteousness. This is what the Bible says, and it was already prophesied in the Old Testament as well. It says, *"I will send you Elijah the prophet,*

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and he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:5–6). Through whom do we turn to God? Is it not that John the Baptist baptized Jesus and thereby transferred all the sins of mankind to Him, and that by believing this we turn and come before God?

That is how it is. If John the Baptist had not done that work, then even though Jesus died on the cross, a person would grow weary before it. Believing does not work, weeping does not work, being martyred does not work, bringing money does not work, serving does not work—so he says, how can I believe? Better that I had not believed; better that I had not been born—and he ends up like Judas. However, because John the Baptist baptized Jesus and transferred sin to Him, we can believe God boldly.

John came in the way of righteousness. It means that he came in the way of righteousness and made us righteous. It means that he baptized Jesus and passed all sin on to Him so that people might receive the remission of sin. Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, took on all that sin, bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the cross and died, and rose again and saved us. Accepting this just as it is, is believing.

On the mountain of transfiguration Jesus called Moses and Elijah and talked together with them. The Bible does not say what they talked about, but Moses is the representative of the law and Elijah is the representative of the high priest. He is the representative of mankind and the representative of the priest, of whom it was said, *"among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11).* Yet there are people who argue about where in the Bible he is written of as a high priest. It is truly a sad thing. That is exactly

what being blind is. Though their eyes are open they do not see, and though they look at the Bible they do not see.

The Bible speaks of the earth. The earth speaks of the heart of a person, that is, the soul. What did the end of the book of Malachi say? It said, *"Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6).* It is the word that those who do not believe receive wrath. Will you ask why I speak of this again when you already believe? It is because there are still many people who do not believe. Is it enough for you alone to receive the remission of sin? We have truly many responsibilities to fulfill.

Among all mankind there are many people who believe this. We make and send out a newspaper that preaches the gospel, and even when a single sheet of that newspaper has fallen by the roadside, people pick it up and read it and come asking us to guide them, saying that they want to hear the Word here and asking how there could be such a word in the world. A sister who runs a beauty shop in a certain city received that newspaper and left one sheet in her shop, and one of the customers read it while waiting her turn and asked to be guided to this church. She said that she had believed in Jesus for a long time but that her sins had not been washed away. So she was connected with us and came, and after hearing the Word three times she received the remission of sin. The Word of God never disappears. It remains just as it is.

The most beautiful and joyful news of salvation!

What is the most precious word in this world? It is this word: that John the Baptist baptized Jesus and transferred the sin of the world to Him, and that Jesus received baptism from

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John and had all that sin of the world transferred to Him and took it on, bore that sin and shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose from the dead and saved us. This is the most beautiful news and the joyful news, and a sound more beautiful than any beautiful music.

Do not grow tired because I keep preaching this word. You must know this in order to preach it to others. Have you not had times when you were preaching the gospel and were stopped short, not knowing what to say? Only when you hear in detail, confirm in detail, and know in detail can you preach in detail and save that soul even when someone challenges you and argues with you. Will you be saved yourselves and stop there? I also could have received the remission of sin and stopped. If I had, I might be living comfortably now, laying hands on people and having them give much offering. But I do this work because I cannot go against the will of God. Since it was said, *"God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:9)*, He would have used someone else if not me.

The reason I keep preaching this to you is so that you also may not live for yourselves alone but preach it to others in detail. Write down just as it is the word we have looked at today, confirm it just as it is, and try preaching it just as it is once. Then people receive the remission of sin. If they receive the remission of sin through you, the kingdom of God has come to that soul, and the Holy Spirit has come to that heart.

I am truly thankful just to be able to stand before you and preach this word. What a good thing this is! God has allowed what could not be. Must not all of us believe this? John came in the way of righteousness—why then do people not believe? All must believe. It is a way that all mankind must believe. John the Baptist came bearing the way of righteousness, baptized

Jesus, and transferred all the sin of the world to Him, and Jesus received baptism from John and had all that sin of the world transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose from the dead and saved us. We must believe this road, this way that leads to the kingdom of heaven. We must be saved by faith. Every single person who believes in Jesus must believe this. It will not do to believe only the cross. This is what I want to tell you without fail.

Even though it is a word we hear a hundred times and a thousand and ten thousand times, if we still do not regard it as precious, is that not a thing to be sorry for before God? When even Jesus acknowledges John the Baptist, will it do for us not to think of it as precious? We must regard this as precious and keep it well. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

To receive the Holy Spirit

< Matthew 17:1-13 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."

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Faith that lives in the last days

I am truly thankful that God has allowed us such a church so that we can preach the Word to our heart's content and also hear the Word together. The one who preaches the Word is blessed, and the one who hears the Word is blessed. I can only give thanks to God that we have somehow come to live a life of faith in such a church, to preach the Word of God and also to hear it, and to be born again.

If the one who stands in the pulpit and preaches the Word is a person who has not received the remission of sin, those who hear are uncomfortable and cannot listen to the Word. When a person who has no Holy Spirit within him stands in the pulpit, in the end he has nothing to say. After speaking of the Word of God, his conclusion is to live a good life, and after that comes talk of money. How can the heart be at peace while hearing such a message? If people come to hear the Word of God but there is always only talk of money, the hearts of those who hear are wounded. So how thankful it is that we can share the Word together as those who have been born again!

In these last days church members and pastors pour out all their hearts into the work of building church buildings. When someone next to them builds a large sanctuary, they think that they must build one too, and so they have the members guarantee one another's loans, take out loans, and pledge offerings, and they put up a large building. But when the building is finished, there are hardly any people in it. Can members who cannot even pay the interest with a month's earnings continue to attend the church? It is exactly as the Lord said, *"And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12)*. While saying that the end of the world has come, why do they collect so much money? If

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the end has come, what need is there of money?

And some people say that since the Lord will come before the tribulation and take us away, of what use are the material things of this earth—so let us give away all we have and go to the kingdom of heaven. However, the Bible does not say so. The Bible says that the Lord comes together with the sound of the last trumpet. It says, *"For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:52)*, and it says, *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*. When is the last trumpet? It is the end of this world. It is after the tribulation has passed by a good while.

God sends the tribulation in order to save the people of Israel and in order to harvest at the last. When grain is winnowed with a fan, the chaff goes out and the kernels are gathered in. When the tribulation comes, it soon becomes evident. So no matter what anyone says, live faithfully, my brothers and sisters and I, thinking that we live in this world until the day the Lord comes. Whether you work at a job or do business, do it faithfully; pray to God, unite your heart with the church, and ask one another for prayer as you live. Even if they say that Jesus Christ has appeared on that mountain over there or in that church over there, do not go and do not believe.

How do we discern such people? The Lord said, *"for a tree is known by its fruit" (Matthew 12:33)*. If they do not care even when the members are dying in their sins but only want them to give much money, and if they do not even look at those who cannot give because they have no money, what does that fruit tell us? When people are suffering because of sin, we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which they

receive the remission of sin, and we must solve their spiritual problems. As for stories about getting along in the world, the people of the world know them better.

When we ourselves are lowered, Jesus is exalted. If we pretend to be holy and pretend to be perfect, the perfection of Jesus cannot be revealed. In fact all people are insufficient before God. The person whose heart is most at peace is the one who, when his own insufficiency is exposed just as it is, acknowledges that he is such a person and that he is truly insufficient. Such a person receives grace before God.

The three on the mountain of transfiguration—Jesus, Moses, and Elijah

Looking at the word we read today, Jesus took the three disciples Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. On that mountain He was transfigured, so that His face shone like the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. And Moses and Elijah came down from heaven and talked with Jesus. The three disciples saw that sight beside Him, but the light was so strong that they were afraid and trembling and lay with their heads on the ground.

Peter said to Jesus that it was good for them to be there, and that if the Lord wished, he would make three tabernacles, one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. At that time there was a voice from heaven saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5)*. The disciples heard that voice and fell down and were greatly afraid. Jesus came and touched them and said to arise and not be afraid, and when they lifted up their eyes they saw no one but Jesus only.

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As He came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded His disciples, *"Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead" (Matthew 17:9)*. Then the disciples asked, *"Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Matthew 17:10)*. Jesus answered, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:11–12)*.

Here we must ask a question. Why of all people did Moses and Elijah come down from heaven and talk with Jesus, and why did He show that scene to the disciples and leave it recorded even for us today? And why did the scribes say that Elijah must come first for all things to be restored? When we look at the Bible, we must ask such questions, and we must find the answer to what we ask in the Bible and obtain a sure answer. In our salvation Moses and Elijah are exceedingly important persons.

Moses, who received the law and the law of sacrifice

Let us look at Moses first. It says, *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17)*. The One who saved us is Jesus Christ, and it was through Moses that God gave the law to all mankind. Moses received the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, and he received about six hundred and thirteen commandments concerning how to live and delivered them to the people.

And the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle is also included

within this law. Just as God appointed, when a sinner laid his hands on the head of an offering, his sin was transferred to that offering. It says, *"And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar" (Leviticus 3:2).* They laid their hands on it and transferred sin, cut the throat of that offering and took its blood and put it on the horns of the altar and poured the rest of the blood on the ground, and cut its flesh into pieces and burned it on the altar of burnt offering and offered it to God. In this way the people of the Old Testament received the remission of sin.

God spoke all of this to Moses, and Moses delivered it to the people and to his brother Aaron and had them make all the furnishings of the tabernacle. Moses also recorded the prophecy that the Savior would come. The one who recorded Genesis is Moses as well. Therefore the five books of Moses become an absolute foundation. The Old Testament is the old promise. It means that God promised like this in the old days and fulfilled it like this in the New Testament. There must not be only the New Testament without the Old Testament.

The high priest on the Day of Atonement

Then why did Elijah have to come to this earth? To know that, we must first look at the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. Let us look from Leviticus 16:29. *"'This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement*

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for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever. And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments; then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year.' And he did as the LORD commanded Moses." (Leviticus 16:29–34)

For the sins committed day by day, the people brought an offering each day, laid their hands on it themselves and transferred their sins, cut its throat and took the blood and gave it to the priest. The priest put that blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and poured the rest of the blood on the ground. However, God knew that the people of Israel could not do all this every day, and so He appointed the Day of Atonement once a year. That day was the tenth day of the seventh month.

On that day Aaron the high priest first laid his hands on a bull and transferred to it the sins of himself and of his family and of the other priests and of those who served in the tabernacle, and offered the sacrifice, and they themselves were cleansed first. After that he brought two goats. One was slaughtered, and he took its blood into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it seven times on the mercy seat; on the head of the other, the scapegoat, he laid both hands and transferred all the sins the people of Israel had committed during the year, and it was sent away into the wilderness.

On the hem of the robe of the priest there were bells, so that

all the people outside heard their sound. Hearing the sound ring seven times, the people knew that, just as God had appointed, all their accumulated sins had been transferred to the sacrificial offering and the sacrifice had been offered. In that way the people of Israel received the remission of sin.

So then, for one day's sins each person brought an offering, laid his hands on it and transferred them, and received the remission of sin; and for the accumulated sins of one year the high priest, the representative of the nation of Israel, did that work in their place. When Aaron died, his eldest son succeeded him. Numbers says that the high priest was consecrated at thirty years of age and was to retire at fifty. Jesus also, at thirty years of age, received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and rose from the dead and thereby saved us.

However, as time passed, the priests all became corrupt. They did not offer the offerings that God had appointed but had the people bring things they could not even sell, and the priests took for themselves the offerings that the people brought. In that way the line of the high priest was cut off. That is why God spoke in the book of Malachi.

John the Baptist, the Elijah whom God sent

This is Malachi 4:5 and 6, the last book of the Old Testament. *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).* It means that He

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would send Elijah and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers.

Then why does He send Elijah? Elijah is the servant who in the book of Kings in the Old Testament stood alone against eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Asherah, showed the people of Israel that the LORD God is the true God, and led all the people who had served idols before God. God does not mean that Elijah himself would come again in the same form, but that He would raise up in this earth one high priest to mediate between God and man. It is the role of a mediator who turns the heart of God to the people and the hearts of the people to God.

When Jesus was born on this earth, the Old Testament comes to a close. Because when the main figure who was prophesied to come appears, all prophecy comes to an end. Yet six months before Jesus appeared, John the Baptist appeared first. God sent him. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was of the high-priestly line of Aaron. When he went into the sanctuary to offer sacrifice on behalf of the people of Israel, God appeared and spoke to him.

Let us look from Luke 1:13. *"But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'" (Luke 1:13–17)*

Zacharias was old, and his wife Elizabeth also was past the age of bearing a child. God spoke within the sanctuary of a thing that could not be imagined at all.

After John was born, his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. *"'And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.'" (Luke 1:76–79)* It said that he would give knowledge of salvation to the people of the Lord by the remission of their sins.

The priests of the Old Testament had all become corrupt and their line had been cut off, but God preserved Zacharias the priest, a descendant of Aaron, and through him brought forth John the Baptist. It was because there absolutely had to be one who would transfer all the sins of mankind to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The man of whom God said that He would send Elijah is the very John the Baptist, and God Himself chose and appointed him. What work did he do when he came? He did the work of baptizing Jesus at the Jordan River and thereby transferring all the sins of mankind to Him.

That is why Jesus said this: *"For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:32)*. What is the way of righteousness? It means that he came to lead us in the right way, that is, in the way of receiving the remission of sin and going to the kingdom of heaven. John is the one who was sent according to the will of God the Father

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and came to this earth. Yet the Pharisees and the scribes did not believe him, and instead the tax collectors and harlots, who were treated as sinners, believed.

Matthew chapter 11 also speaks 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. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:11–14).* Who is the Elijah who was to come? He is John the Baptist. That he is the greatest among those born of women means that he is the representative among people. He was the highest prophet and the last high priest of the Old Testament.

John chapter 1 also speaks like this: *"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe" (John 1:6–7).* This John is not John the disciple of Jesus but the John who baptized Jesus. That he bore witness of the Light means that he bore witness that Jesus had come to remove all the sin of the world. And since it says, *"that all through him might believe,"* it means that because John the Baptist baptized Jesus and transferred the sin of the world to Him, God would have people believe in Jesus through that.

All righteousness fulfilled at the Jordan River

Let us look from Matthew 3:13. *"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) In this way Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and rose from the dead.

At this time John the Baptist was thirty years old and Jesus also was thirty years old. At thirty years of age Jesus began His public ministry and began the work of saving all mankind. John the Baptist knew who Jesus was. Because he knew that He is the Lamb of God, the Son of God, and the Savior of this world, he tried to prevent Him, saying that he ought to be baptized by Him and asking how He could come to him. But when Jesus commanded him to permit it, John permitted it.

Next are verses 16 and 17. *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:16–17)* The Father was well pleased because the Son of God, according to the will of the Father, received baptism from John and had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him, and set out on the road of bearing that sin and shedding His blood and dying on the cross and rising again.

The book of Hebrews records that Jesus is the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven. All of that is contained within the name Jesus Christ. Jesus means Savior, and Christ means the Anointed One. Before God there are only three offices to which one is appointed by being anointed. The first is the king. The kings of the Old Testament were always anointed and established by God through a prophet. The second is the high

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priest. Aaron and his descendants were anointed when they carried out the office of the high priest. The third is the prophet. The prophet who delivers the will of God to the people also was always anointed.

Then what is anointing? It refers to a person who has received the remission of sin and has received the Holy Spirit within. Therefore a person who has not received the remission of sin and has sin in his heart cannot become a servant of God. The name Christ points to all three of these offices, but what Jesus carried out when He came to this earth was above all the office of the high priest. God the Father sent His only Son to this earth in the form of a man, had all the sins of this world transferred to His body, and had Him nailed to the cross and save us.

The word baptism has the meanings of being washed, being buried, and having something transferred. Baptism is exactly the same ceremony as the laying on of hands in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, that sin passes over when hands are laid on the head of an offering was the promise of God, and because it was a promise, when they did as He commanded it happened just so. In the New Testament likewise, when John, the representative of mankind, laid his hands on the head of Jesus and baptized Him, all the sin of the world was transferred to Him.

It says, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and here the word *"thus"* is houtos (οὕτως) in Greek. This word means in the most appropriate way, and further it means the way apart from which nothing else will do. That is, it is the word that there is no other way than this road in which Jesus received baptism from John, the representative of mankind, and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and bearing that sin shed His

blood and died on the cross and rose from the dead. And since the word righteousness means justice and rightness, to fulfill all righteousness means to fulfill the right work of making all people sinless.

The next day, what did John say when he saw Jesus coming toward him? He bore witness, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. He bore witness that this One is the Son of God and the sacrificial offering of mankind, and our Savior who had all the sin of the world transferred to Him from him and bears it away. Through this testimony of John the Baptist we came to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

It says, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. How much did He love us? He loved us so much that He sent His only Son to this earth, had all the sin of the world transferred to that Son through John the Baptist, had Him bear all that sin and be nailed to the cross, had Him suffer shame and rejection and scourging and every kind of pain, had Him shed all the blood of His heart and die, and raised Him from the dead so as to save us completely.

Hebrews also says, *"Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12)*. In the Old Testament the priest transferred the sins of the people of Israel to a sacrificial offering and offered the sacrifice with its blood on their behalf, but in the New Testament Jesus Himself became the sacrificial offering. He had all the sins of the world transferred to His own body and with His own blood cleansed even the consciences of us who believe.

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John the Baptist pointed out the sin of King Herod and was imprisoned and beheaded. However, he is not a failure. He transferred all the sin of the world to Jesus, he bore witness that this One is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and our Savior, and he finished all that mission and was martyred. He himself said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30)*. He fulfilled his own role and withdrew.

The water is the sign that saves us, that is, baptism

The apostle Peter said this: "*There(water) is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21)*. It said that the water is the sign that saves us and that it is baptism. Jesus received baptism from John and had transferred to Him the sins that you commit all your life and the sins that I commit all my life and all the sins of this world, and bearing that sin He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died and rose from the dead.

Then do we not commit faults in the flesh even after we have received the remission of sin? We do. Those also are sins of the world. Those sins also have already all been transferred to Jesus Christ. Lest people misunderstand this, the apostle Peter, after saying that the water is the sign that saves us, added that it is not the removal of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God. What we have obtained through faith is a good conscience.

Is there sin in your heart, or is there none? There is none. Is this an easy thing to say, that there is no sin in the heart? Try telling a person of the world that you have no sin. His mouth

will fall open and not close again. Yet the reason we can say that we have no sin before God is that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John and had all our sins transferred to Him, bore the sin of the world and was nailed to the cross and received the judgment in our place, and rose from the dead and now lives at the right hand of the throne of God as our certain Savior.

The prophet Isaiah also prophesied like this: *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5)*. When Jesus had all the sins of our daily faults and the sins we commit all our lives in heart and thought transferred to Him and died in our place on the cross, how could we say that we have sin before God? A person who knows and believes this cannot say that he has sin.

Jesus had done nothing wrong at all. Yet because there was a custom of releasing one prisoner at the feast, the wicked Barabbas was released because of Jesus, and Jesus stood in his place. Why did it turn out that way? It is because He received baptism from John and had all the sins of you and me transferred to Him, and therefore He had to be nailed to the cross in our place and shed His blood and die and rise from the dead.

The Lord made me a righteous person, made me a saint, and made me a child of God. It says, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)*, and it says, *"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10)*. Believing with the heart—that is the good conscience going toward God. What is important is not your feelings but whether

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or not sin has been transferred. The one who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart has no sin.

The prayer of confession offered with a good conscience

Even though we are sometimes insufficient, the fact that Jesus took on all our sins does not change. We are the children of God. As for our own faults, it is enough to acknowledge them honestly before God. So let me tell you one thing about prayer. When you offer a prayer of repentance, do not ask that the sins that have already passed over to Jesus and been judged be washed away again, but confess those faults. Acknowledge them before God, saying, Father God, I have committed such and such a sin.

What happens when we acknowledge them in that way? Jesus has already taken on those sins. Therefore, whenever we acknowledge and confess our sins, it is felt afresh with thanksgiving that the Lord already had even those sins transferred to Him. In 1 John 1:9 it says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9)*. It is confessing, Lord, I have sinned; I have certainly done wrong.

Then the Holy Spirit within us speaks. He says not to worry, because the Son of God has already had even that sin transferred to Him. Therefore we live with faces that shine like the sun. It is not because our conscience is shameless but because of faith, and because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts, that we come to confess our thanksgiving that He saved such a one as I.

So we come to live according to the word, *"Rejoice always,*

pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18). Confession also is prayer. Since we were saved although we are insufficient, we give thanks in everything. If He had saved a fine person, who would give thanks? It is because He saved an unworthy person that we give thanks.

Lie down at night and think it over carefully. Laughter will flow out from deep in your throat. You will laugh, saying, To think that I am righteous, that I have no sin! And come out to the church and testify to one another that your heart is glad. If a question arises in your heart about what a certain word means, ask one another. If you ask, you will be taught. Because the Holy Spirit is within, we know. Only, we must not speak by fitting things together as we please while not knowing the Bible well. Ask the pastor about the difficult things.

The Lord has saved us like this. I am so thankful. When this word is here, how can we not believe? If we believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we go to the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord is coming. Before that Lord we have become the children of God and the people of God. How can I tell in this hour all of what a wonderful love He has clothed us with? I give thanks to God. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

We fulfill the will of the Lord by preaching the gospel

< Matthew 17:1-13 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at

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their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."

The voice of the Father heard on the mountain of transfiguration

Today we have looked through the Word at what happened to Jesus and His disciples on the mountain of transfiguration. Jesus took the three men Peter, James, and John and went up on the mountain. The mountain of transfiguration does not mean that the name of the mountain is the mountain of transfiguration; it is called so because Jesus was suddenly transfigured on that mountain. The four of them went up together, and the body and the clothes of Jesus suddenly turned white. And two men appeared before Jesus, namely Moses and Elijah. Those three talked together, and the disciples saw that sight beside them.

What would it have been like if you and I had seen such a sight? It says that the disciples were greatly afraid. Since the disciples of Jesus were Jews, they knew Moses well and knew Elijah well. They were persons who had actually lived in the Old Testament age, and they had actually appeared and were talking. But their world is different. The disciples were clothed in bodies of flesh on this earth, while Jesus and those two were in a completely transfigured form.

The disciples, who had seen such an extraordinary sight, spoke. They said that they wished to make three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. At that moment a light suddenly shone and a voice was heard from heaven. "*While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the*

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cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:5). It was amazing enough merely to see that sight, and they even heard a voice from heaven.

We hear often that Jesus is the Son of God, but the disciples of Jesus actually experienced it. Now, in the word *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 17:5)*, it is natural for a father to love his son, but what does it mean that He is the One in whom He is well pleased? It is the word that He is One who accepts the will of the Father just as it is and obeys. It means that although Jesus is the Son of God the Father, He is One who obeyed the word of the Father.

At this time Jesus had already received baptism from John. When He received baptism at the Jordan River also, the same voice was heard from heaven. God the Father spoke in that way because Jesus obeyed the will of the Father, that is, that through the baptism He received from John the Baptist He had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him and took them on, and bearing that sin He would shed His blood and die on the cross and rise from the dead.

Elijah and John the Baptist

When the disciples heard that voice and were greatly afraid, Jesus told them not to be afraid. So they looked up at Jesus, and Jesus alone was there, and neither Moses nor Elijah was to be seen. Because they had seen Elijah, the disciples asked. They asked whether, if He was the Son of God, Elijah must not come before Him as it is recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was because it is prophesied in the book of Malachi, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the*

coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5).

Jesus answered, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands" (Matthew 17:11–12).* It is the word that Elijah had already come but people did not recognize him and treated him as they pleased, and that He Himself likewise would be disregarded and would suffer.

The disciples thought it over. Then who is the one who came before Jesus? John the Baptist came six months ahead of Jesus. John the Baptist pointed out the sins of people, baptized Jesus and transferred the sin of the world to Him, and for that work he was hated and suffered martyrdom. Only then did the disciples realize that the one of whom Jesus spoke was John the Baptist.

Then how are Elijah and John the Baptist connected? In the Old Testament age, when the people of Israel were serving idols, the servant who led them to God more than anyone else was Elijah. Moses was the one who received and proclaimed the law of God, and after him many prophets said countless times that they must serve God, but the people did not listen. Then Elijah, the prophet of God, stood alone against eight hundred and fifty false prophets on Mount Carmel.

Elijah said, *"Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God" (1 Kings 18:24).* The prophets of Baal cried out all morning and even cut themselves until their blood flowed, but there was no answer at all. Then Elijah built an altar of burnt offering, laid the offering on it, poured water into the trench, and prayed. As soon as he finished praying, it says,

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"Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings 18:38). What did the people do when they saw that sight? It says, *"Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!'" (1 Kings 18:39)*. The one who led the people of Israel to God more than anyone else is the very prophet Elijah.

The Old Testament through Moses and Elijah, the New Testament through Jesus and John the Baptist

As the Old Testament age was drawing to a close, God said that the Savior would come to this earth and that before Him He would send the prophet Elijah. But Elijah did not taste death; he ascended riding on a whirlwind. Does that mean, then, that he comes again? It does not mean that he comes again in the same form. Jesus said that Elijah had already come, and He made known that he is John the Baptist.

In the Old Testament age God worked through Moses and the prophet Elijah. He became the God of the people of Israel and protected them. Then how did He do it in the New Testament age? Jesus Himself and John the Baptist worked together. John the Baptist came to this earth first, pointed out the sins of people, and cried out, *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)*. When he appeared in the wilderness and cried out, *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7)*, people came before him and sought the baptism of repentance in order to wash away their own sins.

It was to turn their hearts, not to do so only in action and only in outward form. And six months later Jesus became thirty years old and went to the Jordan River. Jesus said, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* and put His head before John the Baptist, and John baptized Jesus. Thus all the sins of mankind were transferred to Jesus, and all righteousness was fulfilled. The sin that was in the hearts of all people moved over to Jesus, and because the sin was moved over, it was removed.

In the New Testament age Jesus and John the Baptist worked together in this way. God is showing us this work of saving mankind from sin through the Old Testament and the New Testament. Then how do you and I carry this on now? We fulfill the will of God by preaching the work that John the Baptist did and the work by which Jesus, through John the Baptist, had the sins of mankind transferred to Him and took them on, and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again—that is, by preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

People argue like this. They ask where it is recorded that sin passed over when John the Baptist gave baptism, and how that word can mean that. However, this very word is that word. *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* Is it not this very word that Jesus put His head before John the Baptist and John the Baptist baptized Jesus and thereby transferred the sins of mankind and made all people sinless?

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Just as in the Old Testament age the high priest laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and thereby transferred the sins of the people once and for all, the same work was accomplished in the New Testament also. Therefore in the New Testament age Jesus accomplished, together with John the Baptist, the work of saving mankind from sin, so that you and I might know and believe it, and He saved us.

The just salvation of God

Then there are people who think like this. They say that since Jesus is God, He could simply have come and said, I remit your sins, so why did He work in such a troublesome way? However, God is a just One. To be just means to be entirely impartial. It means that He does not lean to one side or the other.

That is why God sent John the Baptist in order to raise up one representative of mankind, and through that one man He had all the sins of man transferred onto the head of His Son. By this method Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him, and bearing that sin He was hanged on the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and saved mankind. This is the entirely impartial salvation by which God saved mankind, and this is what we call the truth.

Even the devil, when he looks at this, cannot disregard it. It was accomplished so perfectly and impartially that no one can refuse it, so that no one can say, You are a liar, You are a dictator who does as He pleases, I do not want to believe such a God. In order to remove the sins of our mankind and to make you and me children of God and sinless people, God sent His

Son to this earth and sacrificed Him. This also is the impartiality of God.

How are you and I different from other creatures? Yet God loved us so much that, in order to make us His children and to make us His people, He bought us with the price of the sacrifice of His Son. People have prejudice, can go wrong, and are also weak; but God is entirely impartial and perfect and just, and He is a Shepherd of love.

In the last days preach the gospel and fulfill the will of the Lord

This age has now changed very greatly. We even hear news that in some country they are trying to pass a law to put chips into people's bodies. If that happens, wherever one goes it is all recorded and all analyzed. So there are those who fear that the time of the book of Revelation is now coming. However, do not be afraid. It is not the end of everything simply because a chip is put into the body.

What does the book of Revelation say? It says, *"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16–17)*, and it says, *"for it is the number of a man: His number is 666" (Revelation 13:18)*. The number of God is seven, and man was made on the sixth day. Six hundred sixty-six suggestively shows that man sits in the place of God and controls man. It is the word that unless one receives permission from him, he cannot buy or sell goods.

The work of man controlling man is becoming more and

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more refined even now. There is one common point, that the last age is drawing near. But that time is that time; what about us? We have a world of the heart and a world of faith that they do not know. It is because the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. So there is nothing to worry about.

In this time when the age in which the Antichrist and the devil rule over people is drawing near, we must do our utmost in the work of preaching this gospel to all the world. It is the work of preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit by which John the Baptist and Jesus saved mankind from sin. We must preach it abroad and we must preach it at home as well. Christianity at home has been laid waste, and there are many who are swept up into heresy. However, before a person who knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit, such things are nothing.

Only, since it is hard for us to do both well, it would be good if we could refine the booklets that have already been made, print them with gospel content, and hand them out. There is no need to hand them out with a great fuss either. If we hand them out when we have the opportunity, people can see them and come to know. We must do this work at home and we must do it abroad as well. What we are to do at the last is exactly that.

In the old days there was little effect even with much effort, but now an age has come in which even a little effort has a great effect. Even though it is difficult and hard for us, let us not become stagnant, but with renewed hearts and with resolve let us preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. I hope that in doing so you will fulfill the will of the Lord. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

John the Baptist, the Elijah who was to come

< Matthew 17:1-13 >

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.' While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!' And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, 'Arise, and do not be afraid.' When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.' And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at

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their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist."

Moses, Elijah, the scribes, and John the Baptist

In the word we read today, Moses, Elijah, the scribes, John the Baptist, and the disciples of Jesus appear. First let us explain who these people are. Moses is the leader who brought the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt and a prophet whom God raised up. He is a great prophet who heard the will of God directly from God. In the work of establishing the kingdom of God in the Old Testament age, he is the servant of God who received revelation nearest to God and delivered it to the people of God.

So Moses is the representative of the law. He is the one who received the law of God directly from God, and the one who met God face to face and received His commands and delivered them to the people. Also, through Moses God showed and spoke of the sacrificial system of the tabernacle, the law of sacrifice, the establishing of the priests, and everything concerning the sacrificial offerings. Moses delivered to the people just as he had heard and just as he had seen with his eyes, and he was the leader who built the tabernacle exactly as He had said and offered the sacrifices and led the people of Israel to receive the remission of sin.

Then who is Elijah? The name Elijah has the meaning, My God is the LORD. He also is the greatest prophet who led the people of Israel before God in the Old Testament age. Elijah is a servant who worked in the northern kingdom and restored again the faith of worshiping the LORD God. He taught and proved to the people who were following the sin of Jeroboam

that the LORD is the true God, showed it to them, and led them before God.

Look at Malachi 4:5 and 6. *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5–6).* It means that he plays the role of a mediator. In the Old Testament the true mediators for the people of Israel are Aaron and his descendants, the high priests, who presided over the sacrifice of atonement. The high priest was one who had the sacrifice offered with the sacrificial offering that God had spoken of, so that the requirement of God was fulfilled, and who also mediated so that the people could come before God through that sacrificial offering. It means that Elijah was exactly such a servant.

The scribes also appear here. It says, *"Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" (Matthew 17:10).* Who are the scribes? Like Ezra the prophet of the Old Testament, they were interpreters of the law and teachers of the law who, after being carried away to Babylon and returning, taught and interpreted the law of God to the people of Israel and led them. They were also leaders of the nation of Israel and were like people in official and administrative positions. These also were of course descendants of Levi and descendants of Aaron. Since the law of sacrifice had all collapsed, they interpreted the law rightly and taught and led. Such people were absolutely necessary for the nation of Israel to be restored.

Then who is John the Baptist? It says, *"Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (Matthew 17:13).* John the Baptist is a descendant of Aaron

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born of Zacharias and Elizabeth in the New Testament age, and he is the one who played the role of the high priest of mankind. He prepared beforehand for the Savior to come to this earth, and preached the word of repentance that made the people of Israel turn before God. And he is the one who gave Jesus the baptism that fulfills all the righteousness of God, and the one who bore witness that Jesus is the Savior of mankind. The one who played the role of that Elijah whom God said in the Old Testament age that He would send is the very John the Baptist.

Our holy Lord, in whom there is no darkness at all

As I said in the daytime message, Jesus asked His disciples, *"But who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)*. Peter answered, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*. Hearing that confession, Jesus praised him and said, *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18)*. Peter believed this salvation, by which the Son of the living God came to this earth and carried out the office of the high priest, received baptism from John and had the sins of His people transferred to Him and took them on, was hanged on the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and saved us.

Next Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24)*, and spoke of how difficult a thing it is to follow Him. And six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. *"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured*

before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him" (Matthew 17:1–3).

It says that Jesus took three disciples and went up on a high mountain and was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun and gave off an intense light. The man Himself turned white just as He was, and light came from His face and light came from His clothes. And Moses and Elijah talked with Jesus. He did so before the eyes of the three disciples. It must have been like watching a film or like watching a play.

The disciples were moved and said that it was good to be there and that they would make three tabernacles, one for Elijah, one for Moses, and one for Jesus, so that they might dwell there. While they were saying this, it says, *"While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'" (Matthew 17:5),* and the disciples heard that voice and fell down. What would it have been like if you and I had been in that place?

At this time Jesus showed His own original appearance. The book of Revelation also records the appearance of the shining face of the Lord. In fact, if He appeared in His original form just as it is, no one could look at Him. That is why He is said to be holy, and to be God in whom there is no darkness at all. Although He is the Son of God, He is in fact the Creator God who made the universe and all things, and our Savior. This is what was being said.

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The meaning of showing this sight to the three disciples

Why did Jesus take three disciples and go up? In the Old Testament age God spoke and accomplished His will through Moses and Elijah. Therefore the ones who represent the Old Testament are Moses and Elijah. Then who are the ones who represent the New Testament? They are Peter, the chief disciple of Jesus, and John the Baptist. Then why did He show this sight to these men? It is that God does not work without showing what He does to His own servants.

Seeing that the face of Jesus shone and His clothes became as white as the light, the three disciples were astonished and enraptured, and that sight must have been deeply engraved on their hearts. A few days before, Peter had confessed that He is the King of the universe and the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven who came to this earth and had our sins transferred to His body and took them on and was hanged on the cross and saved us, and that He is also the Prophet who teaches us all things. Having made that confession of faith, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16)*, that Peter and James and John saw this sight.

What would have been in your heart if you had been in that place? It is that this One is not merely a man. And having even heard a voice from heaven, what would have been engraved on your heart? Would it not have been engraved on your heart that truly You are God, and that God became a man and came to save us, and that He is the One who came to save us by receiving baptism from John and having our sins transferred to Him and taking them on, and by being hanged on the cross and shedding His blood and dying and rising from the dead?

That is why, even after Jesus was hanged on the cross and

died and rose from the dead, appeared to the disciples for forty days and bore witness, and went up into heaven before their eyes, the disciples were not shaken. Because they knew that although He is the Son of God He is God Himself, and that He is the Savior who took on all the sins of all mankind, they were able to keep their faith even when much persecution came after Jesus departed, and they were able to be martyred.

The disciples knew and believed that John the Baptist, a servant whom God raised up like Elijah of the Old Testament, came and baptized Jesus, and that as the wages of that sin Jesus was hanged on the cross and died and rose from the dead and saved mankind from sin. Through that faith the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit came upon their hearts, and by that Holy Spirit they overcame all persecution and suffering and bore witness that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior. The driving force of that strength lay exactly here.

He establishes the church through His servants and has them preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'" (Matthew 17:10). Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen that day until He had died on the cross and risen again. However, in the hearts of the disciples the fact that they had seen Elijah remained large. They knew Moses well because he is the representative of the Old Testament age, but Elijah was a servant of God who was present only for a while in the age when the sin of Jeroboam was at its worst. So, being curious about Elijah, they asked Jesus.

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"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist" (Matthew 17:11–13). He had already said so in the Old Testament. It is exactly as it was said, *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Malachi 4:5)*.

The most important thing is that before the great and dreadful day of the LORD comes He sends Elijah the prophet, and that He sends him and thereby reconciles the people of Israel and God. The people of Israel were those who followed the sin of Jeroboam, betrayed God, and served idols. Because they had betrayed Him, God could not but punish them. Yet Elijah comes and reconciles them. That is why Jesus said, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things."* It is the word that God and the people of Israel were enemies, but Elijah came first and did the work of restoring that.

John the Baptist came to this earth and baptized Jesus at the Jordan River. Jesus said, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, and received baptism from John. And after He came up from the water, God the Father bore witness, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* In this way Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world transferred to Him, and bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the cross and rose from the dead and accomplished our salvation.

Before that, John the Baptist cried out in the wilderness, *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7)*, and he said, *"Therefore bear fruits*

worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father'" (Matthew 3:8–9). He cried out that those who did evil deeds and held evil in their hearts should forsake that evil, and that those who served idols should forsake their idols and truly return before God. And after that, when Jesus came to him, he baptized Him and thereby transferred all the sins of mankind to Jesus.

Therefore we are not enemies of God but those who have been reconciled with God, one family. John the Baptist did that work. He accomplished that work by baptizing Jesus and also by bearing witness to people, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. John the Baptist played exactly the role of Elijah. If Moses and Elijah were the servants of God in the Old Testament age and God accomplished His will through them, in the New Testament age Jesus and John the Baptist together accomplished the work of saving mankind from sin, that righteous and right work of making mankind the people of God.

What does it mean that Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a high mountain by themselves and showed them that He was transfigured and met Moses and Elijah and talked with them? He is showing us that He would establish the church through His own servants, and that through that church He would have the gospel of the water and the Spirit that His servants bear witness to be preached, and so do the work of reconciling all mankind with God.

John the Baptist is not a failure

What we must know is that John the Baptist did not do nothing and that he is not a failure. Jesus continues to bear

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witness concerning John the Baptist. He said, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*. He is this very man. John the Baptist led all people before God and reconciled them. He baptized Jesus and thereby transferred the sins of mankind to Him, and Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of mankind transferred to Him, became the sacrificial offering on the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and thereby reconciled those who believe with God. He made them friends, family, His people, and His workers.

This is the truth that this word is speaking. John the Baptist came to this earth and did the work of restoration together with Jesus, and he did the work of removing the sins of mankind together with Jesus. Therefore disregarding the role of John the Baptist is exactly the same as disregarding Jesus. We must turn from this.

Christian believers all over the world often say that John the Baptist is a failure. That is greatly mistaken. Jesus took His disciples up on a high mountain and called down Elijah and Moses and talked with them before the eyes of the disciples. When the one whom Jesus acknowledges is John the Baptist, how can he be a failure? John the Baptist himself said, *"He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30)*.

Because he baptized Jesus at the Jordan River and thereby transferred the sins of mankind to Him, Jesus took on all the sins of mankind and was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died and rose again, and thereby removed all the sins of all mankind once and for all. That is why He said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*. God accomplished the work of saving mankind from sin with the help of John the Baptist, and went up to the kingdom of heaven. Now He has made it so that whoever believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit is saved. He

accomplished the work by which we may be reconciled with God and go and live in the kingdom of heaven, so that now we are not enemies and do not receive wrath.

We must change the wrong line of faith

The Lord established His plan and worked in the Old Testament age through His servants, beginning with Moses and Elijah, and each time He revealed His will to His servants. This is called revelation. It means that He opens it and shows it. Today also, without this Word of the Bible we cannot know. We cannot know with what plan God has worked toward our mankind, what work He has done, and what work He will do hereafter. But when we look at the Bible we can know.

That is why He said that before the day of His fearful wrath comes He would send Elijah. In order not to receive that wrath, we must believe the fact that the Son of God came to this earth, received baptism from John and had the sins of mankind transferred to Him, shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose from the dead.

If we Christian believers have until now disregarded the ministry of John the Baptist, then although we know as doctrine that Jesus took on all the eternal sins of mankind, we do not know concretely how our sins were taken on in His body. To know that, we must know the role of John the Baptist. You and I believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but they do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They do not know John the Baptist whom God raised up and his role, that is, that Jesus received baptism from John and had the sins of mankind transferred to Him once and for all and took them on, and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose again.

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What they know is only the blood that was shed when He was nailed to the cross.

That is why, even after believing in Jesus, people regard themselves as having sin in their hearts. While saying that the judgment is finished, since they commit sins daily they think that those sins are recorded again in their hearts. However, Jesus took on even all those sins that they do not know about, once and for all, through the baptism He received from John. We must believe this fact. Because they do not know this, they commit sins daily and always call themselves sinners before the Lord. They are sinners not only in word but live as sinners in heart also. So they live praying, 'Lord, I am still a sinner. Please forgive this sin.'

Paul the servant of God said, *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)*, and the Lord said, *"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28)*. Yet Christians today are always sorrowful. They always feel pain because of their own sin. It is because their sin does not disappear like white snow. Although they say that they believe in Jesus as their Savior, since sin remains just as it is in their hearts, they are sorrowful.

Dear brothers and sisters, you must turn away from the leaders who have wrongly guided you. If you do not change the line of faith, you will certainly not be saved. You must know that the work John the Baptist did, that is, the work of baptizing Jesus, is the right work. God the Father sent John the Baptist six months ahead of Jesus, and when he had grown and was living as a servant of God crying out in the wilderness, Jesus came before him. What He said at that time was, *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. It is

the word: You baptize Me; I will receive baptism from John and have all the sins of mankind transferred to Me, and bearing that sin I will shed My blood and die on the cross and rise from the dead, and truly become the Savior of all mankind.

We must remember that John the Baptist obeyed according to the will of Jesus. Only then do we come to know that our sins were transferred to Jesus and that Jesus received the judgment for our sins in our place. Only when that happens does Jesus become the true sacrificial offering for you, and only then can you believe and can your conscience truly become at peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, do you truly wish to receive the remission of sin? Then I hope you will believe the fact that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and had the sins of mankind transferred to Him, received the judgment on the cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and saved you and me. Whoever wishes to be saved must acknowledge the work that Jesus did when He came to this earth, and the fact that John the Baptist transferred all the sins of mankind to Jesus by baptism. Without acknowledging that, no one can receive the remission of sin.

Therefore we must change the wrong line. Christianity has become a religion and has hardened into doctrine made by men, like the various religions of the world. However, the Lord said, *"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).* The ones who accomplished the gospel of the water and the Spirit are Jesus and John the Baptist. Jesus said that He does not work except through His own servants. That is why He raised up disciples and told them to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. Whoever wishes to receive the remission of sin must hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit from the disciples of the Lord who clearly know and

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believe this fact, and receive the remission of sin.

You who have become the people of the Lord by faith, preach the gospel!

What you must be careful about is that you must first change the line of faith and then hear the gospel, so that the remission of sin and salvation may come to your hearts. Do people know that such truth is hidden in Matthew Chapter 17, which we have read? The disciples of Jesus also realized that Elijah is the very John the Baptist. We too must realize it. I truly give thanks.

I believe that the work for which Elijah so labored in the Old Testament age, to reconcile the people of Israel with God and to lead them rightly, was completed when John the Baptist came and did it together with Jesus. Do you also believe? Now we are not enemies of God the Father. We have become His people by faith. We know His will. That is why we preach this gospel.

And we work hard and pray that the Lord will make things go well. The blessing of the Lord does not come while we sit still. We must first prepare the vessel. When we go forward saying, God, we have prepared like this; we intend to work while giving benefit to others; please bless us—then God blesses that work and we come to receive blessing.

This gospel also is not preached just of itself. A price must be paid and a cost must be paid. In order to lead other people in the right direction, our cost is necessary. That is why the Lord made us His disciples and had us do His work. Our Lord is our Shepherd and the One who helps us. Knowing this, I hope you will give thanks before God. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

True faith is revealed at the foot of the mountain

< Matthew 17:14-20, 22-27 >

"And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him.' Then Jesus answered and said, 'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.' And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So Jesus said to them, 'Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, 'The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.' And they were exceedingly sorrowful. When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, 'Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?' He said, 'Yes.' And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, 'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take

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customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?' Peter said to Him, 'From strangers.' Jesus said to him, 'Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you."

From the mountain of glory to the place of suffering

When Jesus came down from the mountain with the three disciples, at the foot of the mountain a suffering boy, powerless disciples, and a sorrowing father were waiting. On the mountain the face of the Lord shone like the sun, but at the foot of the mountain one life was being tormented by a demon. Jesus did not remain in the glorious sight but came down to the place of suffering.

Faith does not end in keeping a beautiful realization and emotion. The person who has received the grace of the Lord comes to look at souls pressed down by sin and despair. The church knows the gospel not in order to boast, but in order to lead to Jesus those who are held by the lies of Satan and cannot solve the problem of sin by their own strength.

The father of the boy brought his son to the disciples, but they could not heal him. The disciples already had the experience of receiving power from the Lord and ministering. However, past experience or office did not guarantee present power. A person who does the work of the Lord must always rely not on his own ability but on the word and the righteousness of the Lord. If, in preaching the gospel, we rely only on human knowledge and persuasiveness, we cannot solve

the fundamental problem of the soul.

Matthew Chapter 17 places the glory of the high mountain and the suffering at the foot of the mountain side by side. The person who knows the glory of the kingdom of God does not turn away from the pain of reality. Rather, with the heart of the Lord he looks more deeply at suffering souls. The boy could not escape from the oppression of the demon by his own strength, and the father also had no power to save his beloved son. Even the disciples could do nothing without relying on the Lord. In this scene we see the figure of mankind under sin. A person hates sin and yet is repeatedly dragged into sin, and though he resolves to live a good life, he cannot remove the evil of his heart.

What the father could do was to bring his son to Jesus and seek His mercy. He did not put forward his own qualifications. He did not speak of how long he had prayed or how well he had lived, but only begged Him to have mercy on his son. It is the same when a sinner is saved. He must acknowledge that he has no power to escape from the power of sin, and come to Jesus, who completely took on sin. The Lord does not mock a powerless person but tells us to bring him to Him.

Faith is not thinking greatly of oneself

Jesus said that the reason the disciples could not heal him was that their faith was little. The word that even faith as a mustard seed can move a mountain does not mean that if a person produces a strong conviction he will accomplish whatever he wants. True faith is not believing in the strength of one’s own heart, but believing that the One who spoke is God and entrusting oneself to that word.

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For the disciples the greatest mountain was not only the demon before their eyes. A heart that trusted its own experience, the pride of thinking that they too could do something, and the unbelief that becomes discouraged when they fail blocked their hearts. Faith begins with denying such a self and returning to Jesus. Just as the father of the boy begged, *"Lord, have mercy on my son,"* we must acknowledge our own inability and seek the mercy of the Lord.

We also, when we serve the gospel and the results we expected do not appear at once, easily blame ourselves or condemn others. However, the One who makes a soul born again is God. An evangelist must not try to change people by his own talent, but must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit exactly and then wait for that word to work in the heart. Even a small faith, if it fully relies on the Word of God, is stronger than great human confidence.

When Jesus rebuked the demon, it came out and the boy was healed at once. The One who delivers people from the power of sin and Satan is Jesus. Human discipline or religious zeal cannot remove the record of sin and cannot completely cleanse the conscience. Only the word of the salvation that Jesus accomplished makes a sinner a righteous person without sin and sets him free from the accusation of Satan.

A mustard seed is very small, but there is life within it. The faith of which the Lord spoke also is not human conviction that boasts of its size, but living faith that has received the Word of God. However confidently a person may speak, if its content differs from the Word of God, it cannot move a mountain. On the other hand, even if he feels weak, if he believes according to the Word what Jesus has done, that faith makes him cross over the great mountain of sin and death. The power of faith does not come from the psychological intensity of the one who

believes, but from God, the object of faith.

The mountain that must first be moved in our hearts is our own thought. Some people think that they can be saved because they are good, and some conclude that they cannot be saved because they are too wicked. Both thoughts are unbelief that regards oneself as greater than the Word of God. Jesus did not take on only some of the sins of good people; He took on all the sins of the world. Therefore faith is laying down both one's own righteousness and one's own despair, and accepting the salvation that the Lord accomplished just as it is.

Satan seizes the conscience of a sinner and condemns him ceaselessly. He makes a person see only the fact that he has sinned and keeps him from seeing the fact that that sin passed over to Jesus. He makes him feel that when he offers many prayers of repentance he becomes a little cleaner, and that when he sins again he has become a sinner once more. Such faith binds a person in ceaseless fear. However, if we believe that Jesus took on all the sins of the past, the present, and the future through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, we can defeat the accusation of Satan. Our feelings may waver, but the word that our sin passed over to Jesus does not change.

The Lord who went toward death and resurrection

Jesus again said to His disciples that He would be betrayed into the hands of men and be killed and would rise on the third day. The disciples were exceedingly sorrowful, but this word was not a prediction of failure but a word announcing the completion of salvation. The death of the Lord was not an accidental tragedy, and the resurrection was not a reversal prepared belatedly. All of it was accomplished within the will

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of God to save sinners.

However, in order to know fully the meaning of the cross, we must know why the Lord bore the sin of the world and died. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And in order to pay the wages of that sin, He shed His blood and died on the cross, and on the third day He rose and gave new life to those who believe. The water, the blood, and the Spirit are not separate testimonies. The water is the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood is the judgment of the cross, and the Spirit bears witness that this salvation is the truth accomplished by the righteousness of God.

The person who believes this gospel does not think that he must erase his own sins day by day with prayers of repentance. When he realizes a fault, he acknowledges it before God and turns from it, but he does not place the ground of the remission of sin in his own tears or resolve. He believes the word that Jesus already took on all sin through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and received all the judgment on the cross. Therefore, the more he discovers his weakness, the more he relies on the perfect righteousness of the Lord instead of establishing his own righteousness.

That the disciples were exceedingly sorrowful when they heard of the death and resurrection of the Lord was because they had not yet clearly realized the whole process of salvation. In the word that the Lord would die, they first saw loss and failure. However, Jesus spoke not only of His being killed but also of His rising on the third day. The cross and the resurrection are not separate events. The Lord, who had paid all the wages of sin, overcame the power of death and rose, and thereby revealed that He is the Son of God and the perfect Savior.

Also, we must not separate the death of Jesus from the baptism that He received from John the Baptist. Because Jesus took on the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He went to the cross. If there had been no transfer of sin, there would have been no reason for the sinless Jesus to be judged. The water is the baptism by which He took on sin, the blood is the cross on which He received the punishment for the sin He had taken on, and the Spirit bears witness that Jesus is God and that this salvation is the truth. To this the resurrection is added, and the perfection of salvation is revealed.

Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a word that weakens the value of the cross. Rather, it makes clear why Jesus had to shed His blood on the cross. The Lord bore the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He received in our place the just judgment of that sin on the cross. When we believe these two events together, we see both the love and the justice of God. God did not cover sin over lightly, but paid its price in full, even to the sacrificing of His only begotten Son.

The confession made after receiving the remission of sin also is not an act for obtaining salvation again. The one who believes does not deny that what he did wrong is sin. He acknowledges it before God as sin and turns from it, and he believes and gives thanks that Jesus has already taken on that sin as well. Such confession is not a repeated atonement arising from fear, but the work by which a saved child acknowledges his own fault before God and turns back by the Word and continues right fellowship with God. A person who believes grace does not treat sin lightly. Rather, thinking of the baptism the Lord received from John the Baptist and the suffering He endured on the cross because of his own sin, he desires all the

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more to live according to the will of the Lord.

When we believe this gospel, the power of Satan collapses. Satan can accuse a person who has sin, but he has no ground to condemn the person who believes the word that Jesus took on all sin and finished even the judgment. Even though the weakness of the flesh remains, in his heart there is the evidence of the remission of sin, and the Holy Spirit dwells there. The Holy Spirit makes the one who believes hold on to the gospel rather than rely on his own ability, and makes him return again to the Word when he fails. This is the true spiritual power that is needed at the foot of the mountain.

The Lord who had freedom yet lowered Himself

In Capernaum those who collected the half shekel raised the matter of the temple tax. Jesus the Son of God is the owner of the temple, and so He originally had no obligation to pay that tax. The Lord cited the fact that the kings of the world take taxes not from their own sons but from others, and said that the sons are free. Nevertheless, so as not to cause people to misunderstand, He had Peter provide one shekel and pay the share for the two of them.

Here we see the power and the humility of the Lord together. The One who caused the needed money to be obtained from the mouth of a fish is God who rules over all creation. At the same time, the One who did not assert that right and quarrel needlessly with people but lowered Himself is also Jesus. True faith does not lie in displaying power or in insisting on one's own right to the end. It lies in laying down what should be laid down so as not to block the gospel, and in seeking the benefit of others.

The one who believes and has received the remission of sin has obtained freedom as a child of God. However, he does not use that freedom for the desires of the flesh or for pride. Just as the Lord forsook His glory and lowered Himself in order to give life to sinners, we also must be careful in word and deed so as not to become a hindrance to even one soul hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We cannot yield the truth of the gospel in the least, but we must be able to lay down our personal reputation and rights willingly.

The half shekel was a tax for the temple. Because Jesus is the Son of God who is the owner of the temple, He originally had no obligation to pay it. Nevertheless, the Lord did not display His own identity and stir up a dispute. In order to avoid people misunderstanding needlessly and so failing to hear the word of the gospel, He paid it willingly. This was not compromising the truth, but laying down His own right in a matter that is not the truth. The one who believes must discern what is the truth of the gospel that must certainly be kept and what is a personal right that can be yielded in love.

In the event of having one shekel obtained from the mouth of a fish, Jesus revealed that He is God who rules over all creation. The Lord had the power to supply what was needed, but He did not display that power for His own convenience. He had Peter go to the sea and fish, and had him obtain what was needed in that process. The supply of the Lord is sometimes revealed through our everyday labor. Faith is not an attitude of doing nothing and only waiting for a miracle. It is obeying the Word and doing what one has to do in one's own place, and entrusting the result to the Lord.

At the same time we must not make our identity as children of God an excuse for behaving irresponsibly in the world. If the laws of the world and the duties of the community do not go

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against the gospel, we must carry them out faithfully. A life of keeping promises, paying debts, and doing entrusted work honestly is not a condition of salvation, but it becomes a beautiful testimony of a person who believes the gospel. If we preach complete salvation with our lips but in our living give others needless cause for blame, it becomes an obstacle to the preaching of the gospel. Just as the Lord lowered Himself in order to prevent misunderstanding, we also must think first of the benefit of souls.

Those who cross over the mountain by relying on the Word

Matthew Chapter 17 conveys together the glory on the mountain and the suffering at the foot of the mountain, the death and resurrection of the Lord, and the small duties of daily life. Faith is not needed only in special moments. When we face a suffering soul, when we discover our own inability, when we look at the suffering that is to come, and when we form relationships with other people in daily life, we must believe the word of the Lord.

The several events of this chapter are not separated from one another. On the mountain God said to hear the word of Jesus, and at the foot of the mountain the inability of the disciples who could not believe that word was revealed. Next Jesus again spoke of His death and resurrection, and at the last He showed the Son of God laying down His own right. True faith begins with confessing the glory of Jesus, goes on to believing the salvation He accomplished, and by that faith to serving suffering souls, and finally to lowering oneself in daily life.

The mountains we must move are not one or two. Before we received the remission of sin, our own righteousness and wrong doctrine were great mountains. After believing the gospel, anxiety, laziness, pride, and worldly greed can become mountains that block the work of the gospel. If we try to move these mountains by our own resolve alone, we grow weary. However, if we continue to hear the Word of God, unite with the church, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Lord moves them one by one. The one who believes is used not because his own strength is great, but because he knows his own inability and relies on the Word.

The church of the Lord is not a community that remains only on the mountain. It is a community that sees the glory of Jesus through the Word and goes down again into the world to serve suffering people. It looks after the sick and the discouraged, preaches the gospel of complete remission of sin to those who are afraid because of sin, and shares together the work needed for preaching the gospel. Some preach the Word, some pray, and some serve with material things and talents. All this service is not the price of salvation but the fruit of faith that shares with others the life we received freely.

Before us there are many mountains that block the preaching of the gospel. The stubbornness of people, the mockery of the world, and our own weakness and insufficiency can loom large. However, what moves a mountain is not our strong will but the faith that believes the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is with the person who believes the fact that Jesus completely saved sinners through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the cross, and the resurrection. The Holy Spirit makes us preach the righteousness of Jesus rather than boast of ourselves.

Therefore we have no need to sit down because of failure.

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Like the disciples, we must come to the Lord, acknowledge our own lack of faith, and learn the Word again. The Lord does not turn away from those who suffer, He rose from the dead, and He is God who rules even over our daily life. When we believe and rely on this Lord, we come to see God, who is greater than the mountain before our eyes. And holding the grace of the remission of sin that we received, we can give ourselves to the work of preaching the gospel of life to souls that are still held in darkness.

Even on days when our faith looks small, Jesus, the object of faith, does not change. He took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He died on the cross and rose on the third day. He is also the Son of God who rules over all things and knows what we need. If we have faith as a mustard seed that believes this word, we can cross over the mountain of condemnation and come to God, and we can also overcome the fear that blocks the work of the gospel.

Therefore we must not look at the mountain and measure only the size of our own faith. We must look at who the Lord is and what He has completed. In this way, the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not end in removing the sin of the heart, but bears fruit in a life that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, gives life to other souls and serves the church. Through people of such faith the Lord today also drives away the darkness at the foot of the mountain and accomplishes His will. ✉

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CHAPTER

18

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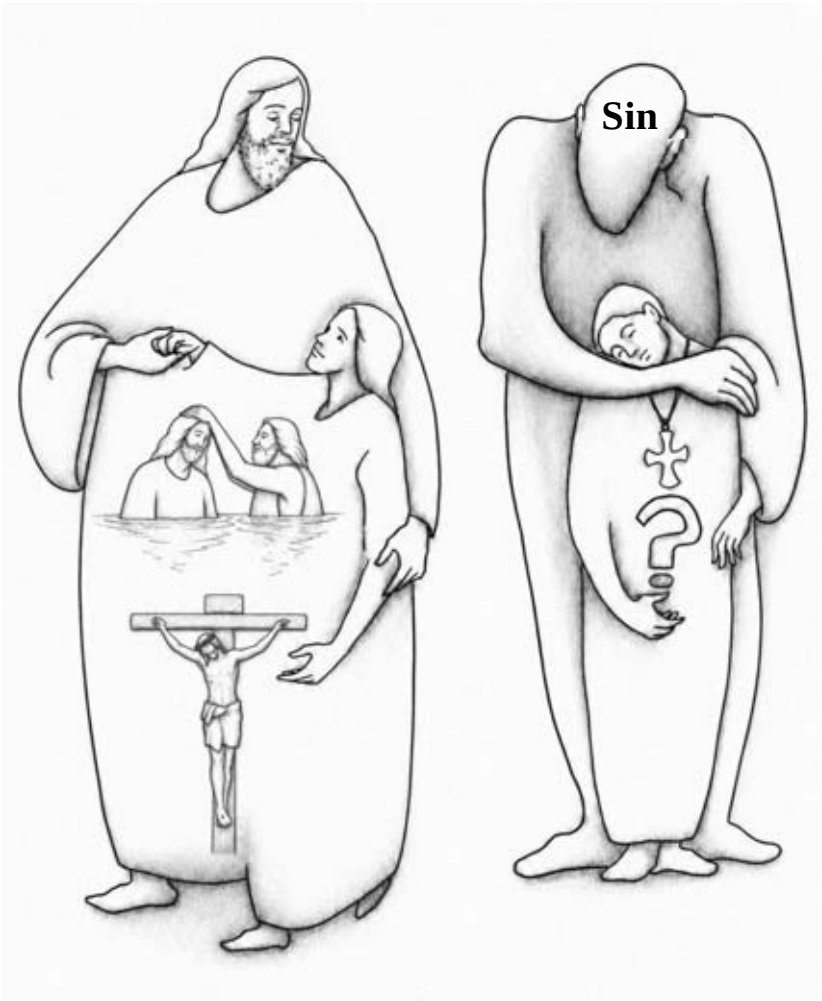

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Matthew Chapter 18

< Matthew 18:1-35 >

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 'If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. 'Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. 'What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that

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sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. ‘Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. ‘Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ‘Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.’ Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. ‘But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying,

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‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. ‘So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.’”

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew Chapter 18 is the word that teaches with what heart those who believe in Jesus must treat one another. The disciples asked who is greater in the kingdom of heaven, but Jesus spoke not of the road of becoming high but of the road of becoming low. Then He told them not to make the little ones stumble, to seek out and restore the one who is lost, to admonish in love a brother who has sinned, and to remember the remission of sin they themselves have received and to forgive their brother from the heart.

1. We must humble ourselves like a little child (verses 1–5)

The disciples asked Jesus, *“Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”* Their interest was in who would obtain a higher position and authority in the kingdom of heaven.

However, Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples, and said, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*

To become like a little child does not mean to imitate everything a child does. The center of the context lies in *"humbles himself"* in verse 4. The kingdom of heaven is not a kingdom that a person enters by putting forward his own knowledge, merit, and righteousness. It is a kingdom that a person enters when he acknowledges that he cannot live without the grace of God and relies on the Word of God.

Therefore the great one in the kingdom of heaven is not the one who has taken a position higher than others, but the one who humbles himself before God and serves the little ones. Moreover, to receive one such little child in the name of Jesus is to receive Jesus Himself. The Lord regards the attitude we take toward a person who looks small and insignificant in the world as the attitude we take toward Him.

2. We must not make the little ones stumble (verses 6–10)

Jesus warned very solemnly against making one of the little ones who believe in Him stumble. Here the little ones do not refer only to those who are young in age. They also include those who believe in Jesus and follow Him but look weak and of little influence in the eyes of the world.

To make someone stumble is not merely to hurt his feelings; it means to make him fall into sin or to make him fall away from faith. To draw another person away from God by one's own greed, wrong teaching, and evil conduct is by no means a light sin.

Jesus said that if a hand or a foot causes one to sin, he should cut it off and cast it away, and that if an eye causes one to sin,

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he should pluck it out and cast it away. This is not a command actually to mutilate the body; it is a strong expression that the problem of sin must be dealt with that resolutely. It means that if there are habits, desires, relationships, and environments that lead a person into sin, he must cut them off boldly, however precious they may look.

The word *"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones"* means that we must not disregard or treat carelessly a weak person within the community. God does not look at how great and famous a person is in the world; He regards the life of one person as precious.

3. He does not give up even one sheep that has gone astray (verses 12–14)

Jesus said that if one of a hundred sheep goes astray, the shepherd leaves the ninety-nine on the mountains and goes out to seek that one. And He said that when he finds that sheep, he rejoices more over having found that one than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

God does not easily give up even one person who has gone astray. The word *"it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish"* proclaims the will of the Father, who regards one soul as precious.

If earlier He said not to make the little ones stumble, here He says that we must seek the one who has already gone astray. A community of faith must not be a place that condemns and abandons a weak person, but a place that seeks, admonishes, and waits so that the person may return.

In the American Standard Version English Bible, verse 11 of Matthew chapter 18 is left without text, and so the content continues from verse 10 to verse 12.

4. We must admonish a brother who has sinned in order to gain him (verses 15–17)

Jesus said that when a brother has sinned, we must first meet him alone and admonish him. From the beginning we must not spread his fault to many people or shame him publicly. We must meet him quietly, speak the truth, and give him the opportunity to turn from his fault.

If he accepts the admonition, *"you have gained your brother."* The purpose of admonition does not lie in defeating and subduing the other person, but in regaining a brother who might have been lost.

However, if he will not hear a personal admonition, we must take one or two more and admonish him again, and if he will not hear them either, we must tell it to the church so that he may receive the admonition of the community. And if he refuses to hear to the end, Jesus said to let him be like a heathen and a tax collector. This does not mean to hate and mistreat him, but that we can no longer acknowledge him as one who stands within right faith. At the same time he is still a person who needs repentance and restoration, so he is not excluded from the gospel and from love.

Therefore the admonition and discipline of the church must not be a punishment for driving a person out, but the last means of love, so that he may realize his sin, turn from it, and be restored again as a brother.

5. The authority to bind and to loose, and the presence of the Lord (verses 18–20)

Jesus said to His disciples that whatever is bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. This word does not mean that a leader of the church or an individual has authority to condemn or forgive

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people as he pleases. As the preceding context shows, He was speaking of the responsibility of the community to discern sin according to the Word of God, to receive the one who repents, and to warn the one who does not repent.

The word that if *"two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask"* it will be done, and the promise *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them,"* are also connected with this process of the restoration of the community. This word is not simply a formula that whatever two or more people want will be accomplished if they ask for it together. It is the promise that when they gather their hearts to give life to one person and restore him according to the will of the Lord, the Lord is with them.

The church does not become the church because the number of people is large; it becomes the true church when it gathers within the name and the Word of Jesus and follows the will of the Lord.

6. We must forgive up to seventy times seven (verses 21–22)

Peter asked Jesus how many times he must forgive when his brother sins against him. He must have thought that seven times would be a sufficiently generous forgiveness. However, Jesus said, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."*

This word does not mean that after counting exactly 490 times of forgiveness we no longer have to forgive. It means that we must not make forgiveness a matter of counting and of numbers. The one who has received the remission of sin from God must live with a heart that forgives again and again.

Even so, forgiveness does not mean saying that sin is not sin, or that a person who has been harmed must take no measures of protection. To point out a fault clearly and to ask for the

necessary responsibility, while not harboring a heart that hates the other person and seeks revenge, is the forgiveness of which the Bible speaks. The preceding procedure of admonition and the following parable of forgiveness do not stand against each other. True admonition and true forgiveness both come out of love that seeks to give life to a brother.

7. The parable of the servant who was forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents (verses 23–35)

In order to explain the meaning of forgiveness, Jesus spoke the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents. A servant owed his king an enormous debt that he could by no means pay. The servant said that if he were given time he would pay it all, but in fact it was a debt that he could not pay by his own strength. The king had compassion on him and forgave him the whole debt.

However, that servant went out and met a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. A hundred denarii was not a small sum either, but it could not be compared with the ten thousand talents that he himself had been forgiven. Nevertheless he took his fellow servant by the throat and demanded that he pay the debt, and he refused even his plea to wait and threw him into prison.

When the king heard of this, he rebuked that servant, calling him a *"wicked servant."* It was because, having received great compassion himself, it was fitting for him also to show compassion to his fellow servant. Through this parable Jesus taught that the one who knows how great is the remission of sin he has received from God comes to have compassion on others and to forgive them.

This does not mean that a person obtains the remission of sin from God by forgiving others. Rather, out of the heart of the one

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who has truly realized the remission of sin he received from God, compassion and forgiveness toward others appear. A heart that refuses to the end to forgive a brother reveals that he has forgotten the grace he received, or that he has not yet received that grace in his heart. That is why Jesus said not to pretend outwardly to forgive but to forgive one's brother from the heart.

The core of the whole

All the words of Matthew Chapter 18 are connected with the heart of God, who regards one person as precious. We must humble ourselves like a little child, not despise the little ones, and be on guard against the sin of making others stumble. If there is a person who has gone astray, we must seek him, and a brother who has sinned must not be condemned and abandoned but admonished so that he may turn and be gained. And remembering the great compassion we have received from God, we must forgive our brother from the heart.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 18 is the word that the people of the kingdom of heaven must humble themselves, regard one little one as precious, restore a lost brother, and live forgiving from the center of the heart with the compassion they have received.

2) Matthew Chapter 18 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew Chapter 18 is not a chapter that systematically explains the gospel of the water and the Spirit itself. What the passage directly emphasizes is a heart that is lowered like a little child, an attitude that regards the little ones as precious, resoluteness toward sin, love that seeks the lost, admonition and

restoration within the church, and forgiveness from the center of the heart.

All these words speak of the life of faith that a person will live after he has received the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished. If a person does not know the grace of the gospel, he exalts himself and despises others, condemns the one who has done wrong, and cannot forgive the one who has sinned against him. However, the one who believes that Jesus removed all his sins through the baptism He received from John and through the cross and the resurrection humbles himself, regards one soul as precious, and forgives others with the compassion he has received.

1. To humble oneself like a little child is to lay down one's own righteousness (verses 1–4)

The disciples asked, *"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* They were already thinking of themselves as people who would enter the kingdom of heaven, and they were curious about who would sit in a higher place within it. However, before speaking of who is great, Jesus first spoke of who enters the kingdom of heaven.

He said, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* To become like a little child does not mean to become a person who discerns nothing. It means not to put forward one's own wisdom, one's own righteousness, and religious merit before God, but to humble oneself before the Word of God.

Before the gospel of the water and the Spirit also, a person must have the heart of a little child. With human thinking it is difficult to understand how all of one's sins could pass over to Jesus at one time. So the person who puts his own judgment first asks, "How could Jesus have taken on even the sins that I will

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commit in the future?"

However, God said that Jesus fulfilled all righteousness through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The Lord received baptism from John in the Jordan River and thereby took on all the sins of the world in His own body, and bearing those sins He was hanged on the cross and judged, and He rose from the dead. To be lowered like a little child is not to place this word of salvation under one's own thinking, but to believe it in the heart just as God said He accomplished it.

The person who tries to wash away his sins by his own repentance, good deeds, and piety is still exalting himself. On the other hand, the person who confesses, "The Lord accomplished everything for me. I have nothing to offer before God except to believe the righteousness that the Lord accomplished," is the person who has humbled himself. The great person in the kingdom of heaven is not the one who has much ability in the flesh, but the one who has laid down his own righteousness before the righteousness of God.

2. One little one who believes the gospel is precious before the Lord (verses 5–7)

Jesus said, *"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me."* People regard those who have knowledge, wealth, and position as precious, while they easily disregard those who are weak and look insignificant in the world. However, the Lord regards the attitude we take toward one little one who believes in Him as the attitude we take toward Him.

A person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit may also be weak in the flesh. He may not have been able to study much, or he may not know the Word well because he has only recently begun a life of faith. However, if that person believes the fact that Jesus took

on his sins through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the cross, he is a precious child before God.

Therefore it is a fearful thing to make one believing little one stumble. Especially if we plant guilt again in a person who is trying to believe the perfect remission of sin accomplished through the baptism, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, and teach him that he must wash away his sins by human merit and by daily acts of repentance, we can make that soul depart from the gospel.

Even though the Lord has taken on all sin, to teach that "you are still a sinner before God, and you must keep on washing away your sins" can become a work that overthrows that person's faith. The one who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit must help one soul to believe the perfect salvation of the Lord rather than display himself.

3. The gospel meaning of the word to cut off the hand and the foot and the eye (verses 8–10)

Jesus said that if a hand or a foot causes one to sin, he should cut it off and cast it away, and that if an eye causes one to sin, he should pluck it out and cast it away. This is not a word to harm the body in reality. It means not to treat lightly the causes of sin and stumbling, but to cut them off resolutely.

However, we must not receive this word as a teaching to wash away our sins by our own deeds. Even if a person breaks a bad habit and lives a good life, the sins of the past, the present, and the future are not thereby removed. The wages of sin were settled only by the baptism that Jesus received and by the judgment of the cross.

Jesus received our sins passed on to Him when He was baptized by John the Baptist, and because of those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross. Therefore the remission of sin

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is not accomplished by our resolve but is received by believing the righteousness that the Lord accomplished. Only, the one who has received the remission of sin does not treat lightly the greed, false teaching, and sinful habits that harm his own faith and the faith of others.

Sometimes, in order to believe the gospel, we must throw away religious ideas that we relied on before. We must cut off the faith that believed only the blood of the cross while confessing that sin still remained in the heart, the religious life that tried to wash away sin by one's own acts of repentance, and the thought that relied on human merit. If we regard our own tradition and experience as more precious than the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that can rather hinder the road of eternal life.

4. The shepherd who seeks the lost sheep is Jesus (verses 12–14)

A sheep that has gone astray finds it hard to return to the shepherd by itself. Not only has it lost its direction, but it is also in danger of wild beasts and hunger. Likewise a sinner cannot solve his sin by his own effort and return to God. A person tries to pay the wages of his own sin by keeping the law and doing good, but the debt of sin cannot be paid by human deeds.

So the Son of God came to this earth to seek us. The Lord received baptism from John and thereby took on all the sins of lost mankind. And as the Lamb of God who bore those sins, He was judged on the cross and rose again, and thereby brought us, who had gone astray because of sin, back to God the Father.

The heart of the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine and seeks the one lost sheep is the heart of God, who does not want even one soul to perish. The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit also must not live enjoying only his own blessing of having been saved. He must preach the remission of

sin that Jesus accomplished to those who are still wandering in sin.

Preaching the gospel is not the work of dragging people into one's own church by force. It is the work of helping a soul return to God by making him realize that Jesus took on all his sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and received the punishment for sin in his place on the cross.

5. The purpose of admonishing a brother is not condemnation but restoration (verses 15–17)

Jesus said that when a brother has sinned, the two should first meet and he should be admonished. And He said that if he hears, *"you have gained your brother."* The most important thing in this word is not 'defeating' a brother but 'gaining' a brother.

A person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also do wrong because of the weakness of the flesh. To say that one has received the remission of sin does not mean that his flesh has become perfect so that he no longer commits any fault. It means that the punishment for all sin passed over to Jesus and that the heart of the one who believes has become clean before God.

Therefore, when a believer does wrong, he must not be condemned with the words, "You have sinned, so you have become a sinner again"; rather, he must be admonished so that he may acknowledge his fault and stand upright within the faith of the gospel. If he will not hear a personal admonition, one or two must admonish him together, and if he still will not hear, the church must admonish him with the Word.

Here the authority of the church is not power for the emotions of an individual leader or for the interests of an organization. The church also must certainly be under the Word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We must not

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regard unconditional obedience to the claims of a certain church or the words of a leader as the same thing as obeying God. True admonition must always be carried out on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus and the gospel, in the direction of giving life to a brother.

6. To bind and to loose on earth is to discern according to the truth of the gospel (verses 18–20)

Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* This word does not mean that the church can decide as it pleases whether a person is saved. It means that the church must bear witness to the gospel of the remission of sin according to the Word of God, and must discern whether a person believes or refuses that gospel.

The person who believes the fact that Jesus took on all sin through the baptism He received from John and paid the wages of that sin on the cross is loosed from sin. On the other hand, the person who refuses the righteousness that the Lord accomplished and tries to solve his sin by his own deeds is still bound by sin. The church does not judge this by a person's feelings or outward appearance, but must examine by the Word of God what gospel he believes.

The word *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"* also must be understood in this context. It does not mean that if only two or three people gather, the Lord will grant all their requests. It is the word that when those who believe the righteousness of the Lord agree together in order to give life to one soul and restore him within the gospel, the Lord is with them.

The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not insist on his own thoughts alone but must be united

with the church of God that preaches the gospel. At the same time, the center of that union must not be a particular person or organization, but the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the cross, and the resurrection.

7. Forgiveness up to seventy times seven comes out of the grace of the gospel (verses 21–22)

Peter asked whether it would be enough to forgive up to seven times when a brother sins against him. However, Jesus said, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* This does not mean to count forgiveness up to 490 times, but that we must not make forgiveness a matter of calculation.

By human strength alone it is hard to forgive a person who repeatedly wrongs us. However, when we know how great a grace of the remission of sin we have received from God, the heart with which we look at others becomes different.

The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit was not saved because he was good and righteous. He also was a person who owed a debt of sin that he could by no means pay before God, but he received the remission of sin because Jesus took on all those sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged in his place on the cross.

Therefore forgiving a brother is not a condition or a price for completing one's own salvation. It is the grace of the remission of sin already received flowing out of the heart. It is not that I receive the remission of sin from God by forgiving my brother; it is that I can regard my brother as precious because God first gave me the immense blessing of the remission of sin.

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8. The debt of ten thousand talents shows the debt of sin that man cannot pay (verses 23–35)

The servant who owed ten thousand talents could not pay the debt even if he sold everything he had. Nevertheless he said, *"Have patience with me, and I will pay you all."* This is like the figure of a sinner who does not yet know the fact that he has no ability whatever to pay. A person thinks that if he prays more earnestly, serves more, and lives more uprightly, he can pay for his own sins.

However, with what can we make restitution for the sin of having broken the law of God? However many good deeds we may do, the sins already committed are not thereby removed. Since the wages of sin is death, judgment must certainly be received.

God did not close His eyes to sin as though it did not exist. He passed our sins on to Jesus and judged Him. The Lord took on the sins of our whole life in His one body through the baptism He received from John, and on the cross He said, *"It is finished!"* and paid the wages of those sins. And by rising again He gave new life and eternal life to those who believe.

This is the grace of having been forgiven a debt of sin greater than ten thousand talents. We had no ability whatever to pay before God, but the Lord took on the whole wages of sin with His own water and blood. The remission of sin was not accomplished by God and man each bearing half. From beginning to end it is the salvation that God accomplished.

Yet the servant who had been forgiven a great debt did not forgive his fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. He heard from his fellow servant almost the same plea that he himself had made to his master, but he showed no compassion. It was because he had not engraved on his heart the grace he had received.

The person who has received great grace from God can also show grace to others. When we think that we can by no means forgive the fault of a brother, we must first look back at how great a grace of the remission of sin we ourselves have received from the Lord.

This parable does not remain only at the lesson of forgiving a brother in human relationships. To have been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents indicates that we have come to believe the perfect remission of sin that Jesus accomplished by receiving the sins of the whole world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, by bearing those sins and being judged on the cross, and by rising from the dead. The person who has received the remission of sin by believing this gospel must pass on the grace of salvation he has received to other souls as well, just as it is.

If a person has himself received the remission of all his sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and yet teaches others that their sins are washed away only when they offer prayers of repentance every day, he is not sharing with others the grace of the complete forgiveness that he received. This is the same as the attitude of the wicked servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents and yet demanded a hundred denarii from his fellow servant. The one who has received the remission of sin must not hide or alter the gospel to his own advantage, but must preach to other souls, just as it is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that God removed all sin once and for all.

9. To forgive from the heart is not to hide sin (verse 35)

Jesus said that each of us must forgive his brother from the heart. To forgive from the heart is not to keep harboring a spirit of revenge in the heart while saying with the lips only, “I forgive

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you.” It is to remember the compassion one has received and to lay down the other person’s fault before God.

Even so, this does not mean to deny the fact of the harm or to ask no responsibility of the offender. Matthew Chapter 18 itself says to admonish step by step a brother who has sinned. If necessary, one may set boundaries in the relationship, receive the protection of the community, and even ask for legal responsibility. Forgiveness is not saying that sin is not sin; it is not becoming the master of hatred and revenge oneself.

Also, we must not interpret the warning of verse 35 to mean that if a person fails once to forgive his brother he immediately loses salvation. This word reveals the contradiction of a heart that claims to have received the immense remission of sin from God and yet shows no compassion at all to others. In the one who has truly received the gospel, a heart arises that forgives a brother and seeks to give him life, even if not perfectly.

The core of the whole

Seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Matthew Chapter 18 teaches how the one who has received the remission of sin must show the grace of the gospel in human relationships and in the life of the church.

Jesus took on all our sins in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The Lord bore those sins and was judged on the cross, and by rising from the dead He accomplished our perfect salvation. The person who believes this fact cannot put forward his own merit, and so he is lowered like a little child. Since he also was a lost sheep and was found by the Lord, he regards one small soul as precious. Since he was freely forgiven a debt of sin like ten thousand talents, he has compassion on the brother who has wronged him and forgives him from the heart.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew Chapter 18 is the word that the person who has been forgiven an unpayable debt of sin through the baptism Jesus received from John and through the cross and the resurrection must humble himself, regard the little ones as precious, seek out and restore a lost brother, and live forgiving from the center of the heart with the compassion he has received. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 18

Like the servant who was forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents, the one who has received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit forgives his brother from the heart

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 18 is the word that teaches with what heart those who believe in Jesus must treat one another. When the disciples asked, *"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* Jesus set one little child before them and said that unless they were converted and humbled themselves like a little child, they would by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. The great one in the kingdom of heaven is not the one who has taken a high position but the one who humbles himself before God.

Next Jesus warned very solemnly against making one of the little ones who believe in Him stumble, and He told them to cut off sin so resolutely that He said to cut off a hand or a foot or to

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pluck out an eye if it causes one to sin. Also, through the parable of the shepherd who goes out to seek one lost sheep among a hundred, He showed the heart of God, who is not pleased that even one soul should perish.

Jesus said that if a brother sins, the two should first meet and he should be admonished; if he will not hear, one or two should be taken along; and if he still will not hear, it should be told to the church. The purpose of this admonition is not to cast a person out but to have him realize his sin, turn from it, and be restored again as a brother. The authority to bind and to loose on earth, and the promise of the presence of the One who is with those who gather in the name of the Lord, were also given in this context.

When Peter asked how many times he must forgive his brother, Jesus said to forgive not only up to seven times but up to seventy times seven. And through the parable of the servant who was forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents and yet did not forgive his fellow servant who owed a hundred denarii, He taught the forgiveness that one who has received great compassion ought to show.

All these words are fully understood within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and thereby took on all the sins of the world; bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the cross and thereby paid in full the debt of sin that could not be paid; and by rising from the dead He overcame the power of sin and death. We can forgive our brother because we ourselves were first forgiven immeasurable sin through this gospel.

Matthew Chapter 18 teaches that the people of the kingdom of heaven must humble themselves, regard one little one as precious, seek a lost brother, and live forgiving from the heart. Now, as we look at the words of the passage in order, we will

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consider that the true ground of humbling ourselves, serving, and forgiving lies in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

The great one in the kingdom of heaven is not the one who exalts himself but the one who is lowered like a little child, believes the gospel, and serves little souls

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 'If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. 'Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. 'What do you think? If a man has a

hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'" (Matthew 18:1–14)

The disciples asked Jesus, *"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"* They were thinking about which of them would sit in a higher position when Jesus soon revealed His royal authority. Because in the world a person who has much power, wealth, and ability is acknowledged as a great person, the disciples also thought of the kingdom of heaven as being similar to the order of the world.

However, Jesus set a little child in the midst of the disciples. At that time a little child had no social power or position and had to depend on the protection and provision of adults. Jesus completely overturned the standard of greatness that the disciples had been thinking of.

To become like a little child does not mean that a child has no sin or that everything he does is pure. Nor does it mean to become an immature person who believes whatever people say without thinking. It means an attitude of humility and dependence, in which one does not boast of his own ability and position but acknowledges that he cannot live without the grace of God.

Jesus said, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* Here to be converted is to turn from the proud direction of arguing about who is greater. We must throw away the thought of entering the kingdom of heaven by our own righteousness and ability, and receive the salvation of God as grace.

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From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, to humble oneself like a little child is to acknowledge that one cannot wash away his sins by his own strength. A person cannot completely remove the sin of his heart by keeping the law, piling up good deeds, or offering prayers of repentance over and over. Spiritual humility is to acknowledge that one is a sinner who can only perish without the salvation of God, and to accept the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

Jesus took on all the sins of all mankind in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins, He was hanged on the cross and shed His blood and died and thereby received all the punishment for sin, and by rising from the dead He completed salvation. Faith like that of a little child is the faith that receives this word in the heart without adding to it or taking away from it by one's own thoughts.

The great person in the kingdom of heaven is not the one who takes a position higher than others. The great person is the one who humbles himself, relies on the grace of God, and serves those who are weaker than himself. The greatness of the kingdom of heaven is revealed not by how many people one has ruled over, but by how much one has served the lowly with the heart of the Lord.

Jesus said, *"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me."* This includes the meaning of loving and protecting actual children. At the same time it teaches that to receive in the name of Jesus one little one who is young in faith and regarded as insignificant in the world is to receive the Lord Himself.

The church must not regard as precious only those who are strong and capable while disregarding the weak. A person who is young in faith, a person who is slow to learn, and a person

who has no social position are also precious souls whom Jesus saved with the price of His blood. To judge a person by outward appearance and ability and to despise him is the same as despising the Lord who loves him.

Jesus warned very solemnly against the sin of making one little one stumble. To make someone stumble means, like placing an obstacle so that a person walking along the road trips and falls, to shake the heart of a believer so that he departs from the gospel and from the Lord.

To teach a wrong gospel or to speak of the salvation Jesus accomplished as though it were incomplete can make a person stumble. The hypocrisy and greed of religious leaders, the abuse of authority, abusive speech or mistreatment of believers, and conduct that sets a bad example can also make a person who is young in faith fall. Especially, to wound children or weak people who ought to be protected and then to force silence by religious authority is a sin that the Lord rebukes very severely.

The sin of making a little one stumble is very serious before God. The word *"it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea"* is not a command for people to inflict such a punishment themselves. We are not to become judges and take revenge; we must fear God and examine ourselves so as not to become a stumbling block to the faith of others.

Jesus said that offenses must come into the world, but that does not remove the responsibility of the person who commits the sin. We cannot justify our own wrongdoing on the ground that the world is evil. God judges by what words and deeds each person has made another soul fall.

Jesus said that if a hand or a foot causes one to sin, he should cut it off and cast it away, and that if an eye causes one to sin, he should pluck it out and cast it away. This is not a command

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actually to mutilate the body. Even if the hand and the foot and the eye are removed, if the heart that produces sin remains as it is, the problem of sin is not solved.

This word means not to treat lightly the causes of sin and stumbling but to cut them off resolutely. We must boldly keep away from habits and places that lead into sin, environments that stir up desire, and wrong teachings and relationships that break down faith. It is the word to regard the soul and eternal life as more precious than the benefit and comfort of the flesh.

However, the act of restraining the hand and the foot and the eye does not save us from sin. By human resolve and self-control alone, the sin itself that is within the heart cannot be removed. Because Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John and received the punishment for those sins on the cross, we receive the remission of sin by believing that fact.

This does not mean that after receiving the remission of sin we may follow the desires of the flesh just as they are. Salvation is received by the righteousness of Jesus, but the one who has been saved must follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, cut off the channels of sin, and live so as not to make others stumble. A holy life is not a condition for paying the price of salvation but the fruit of faith that the saved person must bear.

Jesus commanded, *"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones."* And He said that their angels always see the face of the Father who is in heaven. On the basis of this word there is no need to conclude that a particular guardian angel has been assigned to each person. The point is that God does not forget the little ones but watches over them and regards as important the treatment they receive.

In the world it may be thought that even if one person disappears there is no great effect. However, to God there is no

insignificant soul. God does not regard it lightly when one soul is disregarded, wounded, and driven away from faith. The church also must not look only at numbers and efficiency but must care for one person as precious.

Jesus spoke the parable that if one of a hundred sheep goes astray, the shepherd goes out to seek that sheep. A sheep lacks a sense of direction and the ability to protect itself, so once it goes astray it finds it hard to return to the shepherd by itself. A human being fallen into sin also cannot return to God by his own wisdom and ability.

Just as the shepherd goes out to seek the sheep that has gone astray, Jesus came first to seek us sinners. We did not go up to God; the Son of God was clothed in the body of a man and came down to us. And by bearing our sins through His baptism and giving His life on the cross, He saved us who were lost.

The word that when the shepherd finds one sheep he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine does not mean that he does not love the ninety-nine. It shows the special joy of having found again the sheep that was lost. God greatly rejoices when one sinner hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receives the remission of sin, and returns.

This parable applies not only to the work of seeking a soul who has not yet believed the gospel and preaching to him, but also to the work of caring again for a person whose faith has grown weak, who has lost his way and drifted from the community. Rather than immediately condemning and abandoning the one who has done wrong, we must admonish him with the Word, endure patiently, and seek him so that he may return within the gospel.

The word *"it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish"* does not mean that everyone is automatically saved even without believing. God

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does not lightly cast away even one soul, and He wants that soul to be saved. Therefore the one who has believed the gospel first must take part in the will of the Lord, who seeks the lost soul.

Matthew 18:1–14 declares that the order of the kingdom of heaven is different from the order of the world. In the kingdom of heaven the one who humbles himself is great rather than the one who exalts himself, and one little one is regarded as more precious than a strong person. The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit must lay down his own righteousness and receive the perfect salvation of Jesus like a little child. And with the heart of the Shepherd who sought and saved him, he must receive the weak, make no one stumble, and live preaching the gospel to seek one lost soul.

The purpose of admonishing a brother is not to condemn and cast him out but to gain and restore him within the gospel

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 'Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 'Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:15–20)

Like the servant who was forgiven
a debt of ten thousand talents, the one who has received the remission of sin
through the gospel of the water and the Spirit forgives his brother from the heart

This word follows the parable of the shepherd who seeks the one lost sheep. Therefore the purpose of dealing with the sin of a brother does not lie in attacking him and driving him out. The purpose is to seek the brother who has lost his way because of sin and to bring him back into the gospel and into a right relationship with the church.

Jesus said, *"Moreover if your brother sins against you."* Here sin does not mean simply everything that differs from my thinking or that hurts my feelings. We must not enlarge a personal preference or a difference of opinion into a sin before God and condemn the other person. We must first examine ourselves as to whether it is a clear fault in the light of the Word of God.

If a brother has actually sinned, Jesus first said, *"go and tell him his fault between you and him alone."* It means not to inform many people from the beginning or to spread a rumor. Rather than publicizing another person's fault and shaming him, we must meet him one to one, quietly confirm the facts, and admonish him in love.

This order protects the honor of the brother and gives an opportunity to correct a misunderstanding. If we spread words that we have not confirmed directly, we can harm a person with what is not true. The one who admonishes must also examine whether his own emotions and misunderstandings are mixed in. Admonition must not be an outpouring of anger but an act of love that seeks to gain a brother.

The word *"If he hears you, you have gained your brother"* makes the goal of admonition clear. If the other person acknowledges his fault and turns from it, we have not won an argument but gained a brother. True joy lies not in subduing the other person but in the restoration of a relationship that had grown distant because of sin.

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To hear an admonition does not end merely with saying, "I am sorry." It includes acknowledging one's fault before the Word of God, turning from that conduct, and, if harm has been done, setting it right as far as possible. However, such turning does not add anything to the salvation of Jesus or pay the price of the remission of sin.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the remission of sin is not accomplished by a person's apology or good deeds. Jesus took on all our sins of the past, the present, and the future in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And He received the punishment for all those sins on the cross and completed the remission of sin by rising from the dead.

A person who has received the remission of sin by believing this gospel has not become perfect in the flesh, and so he can do wrong in his life. At such a time he must acknowledge that his conduct was wrong and turn from it. This is not in order to obtain salvation again, but in order to live rightly before God and before his neighbor according to the grace of the salvation he has already received.

Jesus said that if a brother will not hear a personal admonition, we should take one or two more with us. These are not a crowd for putting pressure on the other person, but witnesses who confirm the facts objectively. They must examine fairly whether what the one who admonished says is right, and what circumstances lie behind the explanation of the other person.

The word "*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established*" is a protection that keeps anyone from being condemned on the claim of only one person. The church must not judge a believer by rumor or by the emotions of an individual leader. It must confirm the facts, listen fully, and

judge carefully according to the Word of God.

If he will not hear the admonition of one or two witnesses either, then Jesus said to tell it to the church. The church becomes involved not in order to publicize the fault widely and put him to shame. It is the last stage, in which the whole community prays for the restoration of that soul, admonishes with the Word, and prevents the sin from spreading to others.

This process is not a public trial procedure to be applied mechanically to every small fault. Especially in matters involving safety and legal responsibility, such as violence, sexual abuse, child abuse, and fraud, a victim must not be required to meet the offender alone. Safety must be secured at once, and if necessary the investigative authorities or a specialized agency must be informed. The procedure of admonition within the church must not be used as a means of hiding a crime or of preventing a victim from reporting it.

Also, forgiveness and the restoration of trust must be distinguished. A victim can lay down the spirit of revenge, but he has no obligation to return at once to the same relationship as before while the offender has not acknowledged responsibility and has not changed his conduct. True restoration must be accompanied by confirmation of the facts, responsibility, turning, and safety.

If he refuses even the admonition of the church, Jesus said, *"let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."* This does not mean to hate or mistreat that person. It means that even though he claims with his lips to be a brother, in reality he is refusing the faith and the admonition of the community, and so he is to be regarded as one with whom normal fellowship of faith can no longer be shared.

We must think of how Jesus treated heathens and tax collectors. He acknowledged them as sinners but did not hate

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them; He preached the gospel to them so that they might be saved. Therefore to regard someone as a person outside the church is not to make him an enemy but to treat him as one who must hear the gospel again. The discipline of the church also must not be a permanent revenge but a last admonition that hopes for repentance and restoration.

Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."* This does not mean that a leader of the church or a majority of people can condemn or save a person as they please. Nor is it the word that heaven unconditionally approves the changeable judgments of people.

The authority to bind and to loose can be rightly exercised only under the word and the gospel of Jesus. When the church calls sin sin according to the Scriptures, and confirms true turning and makes the judgment to restore fellowship, it comes into agreement with the will of heaven. If a judgment is made for personal interests or to protect the authority of a leader, this promise cannot be applied to it.

The authority to bind and to loose appears in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as well. The person who believes the gospel, that Jesus took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of that sin on the cross, and rose again, is loosed from sin. On the other hand, if a person refuses this word of salvation to the end, he remains bound in his own sin just as he is.

The actual authority that looses from sin lies not in the church or in people but in Jesus. Jesus has already completed salvation, and the church proclaims that fact according to the Word. The church does not make or remove a person's sin at will; it conveys the remission of sin given to the one who believes the gospel and the condemnation that remains on the

one who does not believe.

Jesus said that if two agree on earth and ask, God the Father will do it for them. Here to agree does not mean that two people hold the same desire and demand strongly what they want. Since the preceding context deals with the sin and the restoration of a brother, it refers to the prayer in which the church with one heart seeks the restoration of a brother and the will of God.

The word *"concerning anything that they ask"* is also not a blank check that every human desire will certainly be granted. To ask in the name of Jesus means to ask in accordance with the will and the character of Jesus and with the gospel. A prayer that comes out of greed and a spirit of revenge does not become a prayer offered in the name of Jesus merely because many people agree to it.

Prayer in agreement is not a work of forcing human will upon God but a work of seeking the will of God together and obeying that will. When the church prays for a lost soul and gathers its heart for the preaching of the gospel and for the holiness and peace of the community, Jesus works in their midst.

The word *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"* does not mean that Jesus is present only when two or three or more are gathered. The Lord is with a believer who prays alone as well. Also, a gathering does not automatically become a gathering of Jesus merely because many people have come together.

What is important is to gather *"in My name."* To gather in the name of Jesus means to acknowledge Jesus as Master and to gather according to His word and His gospel. The Lord is present in a community that reveals the righteousness and the love of Jesus and seeks the restoration of souls, not in a community that has gathered for human power or profit.

Not only personal faith but also the community of the church

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is absolutely necessary. Believers must admonish one another, turn when they have done wrong, and pray together for those who are weak. However, the authority of the church is not power for ruling over people but the authority of service, for protecting souls with the word of Jesus and restoring them within the gospel.

In the end Matthew 18:15–20 does not say to ignore sin, nor does it say to abandon a sinner at once. It tells us to hold on to both truth and love and to admonish step by step in order to gain one person. The one who has received the remission of all his sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot condemn a brother in pride. With the heart of Jesus, who removed all his sins, he must admonish his brother, pray with the church for the restoration of that soul, and carry out every judgment humbly under the Word of God.

The one who has been forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents of sin must forgive from the heart the brother who has wronged him by a hundred denarii

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that

Like the servant who was forgiven
a debt of ten thousand talents, the one who has received the remission of sin
through the gospel of the water and the Spirit forgives his brother from the heart

servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 'But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 'So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'" (Matthew 18:21–35)

Earlier Jesus had spoken of how a brother who has sinned must be admonished and restored. Having heard that word, Peter asked how many times he must forgive if a brother sins against him repeatedly. He thought that seven times would be a sufficiently generous forgiveness.

However, Jesus said, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* This word does not mean that we may forgive up to exactly 490 times and need not forgive from the 491st. It means not to count and record each fault of a brother, but to keep on forgiving while remembering the mercy we have received from God.

Forgiveness may look easy in words, but for a person who has actually been wounded it is very difficult. If one has been betrayed repeatedly or deeply wounded, the emotion does not easily disappear. Jesus also did not say that forgiveness is easy

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by human strength alone. When we first realize how great is the remission of sin we have received from God, we obtain strength to forgive others.

In order to explain the ground of forgiveness, Jesus spoke the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents. Ten thousand talents was an enormous sum that an individual of that time could not pay even if he worked all his life. This indicates the greatness of the sin that a person has committed before God and his own inability to solve that sin.

The king wanted to settle accounts with his servants. God judges the life and the sin of every person justly. A human being must certainly bear responsibility for the sin of having broken the law of God. Since the wages of sin is death, no good deed or religious effort can pay the wages of sin in its place.

The servant could not pay the debt even if he sold his body and his wife and his children and all that he had. Nevertheless he said, *"Have patience with me, and I will pay you all."* He did not sufficiently know the fact that he had no ability whatever to pay the debt. This figure shows the figure of a man who tries to pile up his own efforts, acts of repentance, and good deeds so as to become righteous before God someday.

Even if a person lives uprightly all his life, he cannot pay the wages of the sins he has already committed. Even if he commits no sin from today, the sins of the past are not thereby removed, and a human being cannot but do wrong hereafter also through the weakness of the flesh. Therefore a sinner must not ask God for more time, but must acknowledge that he has no ability whatever to pay and seek the mercy of God.

The master did not merely believe the promise of the servant and extend the period for paying the debt. He was moved with compassion for the servant, released him, and forgave him the whole debt. To forgive a debt is not to reduce part of it or to put

it off until later, but to remove it completely so that it need no longer be paid.

From the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, our sin also was forgiven in this way. Jesus took on all the sins of all mankind in His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And by being hanged on the cross and shedding His blood and dying, He received all the punishment for sin, and by rising on the third day He overcame sin and death and completed salvation.

That God forgave our sin does not mean that He ignored sin without any price. The Son of God paid with His own life, in our place, the wages of sin that we could not pay. Because Jesus took on sin through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment on the cross, the justice of God was fulfilled, and the one who believes can be completely set free from the debt of sin.

The remission of sin is not received by offering many prayers of repentance or by making restitution for sin with good deeds. It is received by believing the fact that Jesus took on all my sins through the baptism He received from John and paid all the wages of those sins on the cross. Salvation is not the result of a sinner having paid God back, but the grace that God bestowed because He had compassion on a sinner.

However, the servant who had been forgiven ten thousand talents went out and met a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. A hundred denarii was also not a small sum, one that a laborer would have to work many months to pay. This parable does not say that the wounds others have given us are nothing. In reality the wounds and losses we receive from people can be great and painful.

Yet ten thousand talents and a hundred denarii differ beyond all comparison. When we realize the debt of sin that God has

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forgiven us, the standard by which we look at the sins that others have committed against us also becomes different. We do not treat the other person's fault lightly, but we come to remember that we ourselves received the remission of sin through the infinite compassion of God.

The fellow servant begged, *"Have patience with me, and I will pay you all."* This is almost the same as what the servant who owed ten thousand talents had said before the king a little earlier. However, that servant did not show his fellow servant the mercy he himself had received. He took his fellow servant by the throat, demanded the debt, and finally threw him into prison.

The conduct of this servant shows that the forgiveness he received from the king had not entered his heart at all. He had received great grace, but he did not realize the meaning of that grace, and he did not let the compassion he had received flow out to another. That is why the master called him a *"wicked servant."*

The person who has received the remission of sin from God does not thereby become a perfect person, but he knows that he too was saved by compassion. Therefore he cannot claim that the right to judge and take revenge on another belongs to himself. The one who has received the remission of sin has a responsibility to show to others the compassion he has received.

Even so, forgiveness does not mean saying that sin is not sin or covering up and hiding a fault. As the preceding word says, a brother who has sinned must receive admonition, and he must acknowledge his fault and turn from it. Forgiveness and right admonition do not stand against each other. Because we love, we correct sin; because we do not take revenge, we forgive from the heart.

Forgiveness also does not make the offender bear no

responsibility at all. For crimes such as violence, abuse, and fraud, the safety of the victim must be secured and responsibility must be asked according to the law. Even if a victim forgives the offender, he does not have to restore at once the same relationship and trust as before. The restoration of trust requires true repentance and a change of conduct.

To forgive from the heart does not mean that the memory and the emotion of the wound disappear at once either. The healing of the emotions may take time. Forgiveness from the heart is to entrust the final judgment and revenge to God, and to desire that the other person may turn and come to salvation and restoration. Whenever hatred and a spirit of revenge rise up again, it is to remember the compassion of God that one has received and to entrust that person into the hands of God.

The master delivered the wicked servant to the torturers. This is a solemn warning against a stubborn heart that claims with the lips to have received the remission of sin from God and yet does not have compassion on another to the end. A person who has not really realized the grace of God reveals, by acting mercilessly toward others, that he has not received that grace in his heart.

In this parable the figure of the wicked servant appears not only in failing to show compassion to another in human relationships. The person who has been forgiven all his sins, like ten thousand talents, must pass on to other souls, just as it is, the gospel of the perfect remission of sin that he himself received. Just as the servant who was greatly forgiven by the king ought to have shown compassion to his fellow servant, the one who has received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must preach the complete gospel so that other souls also may obtain the same remission of sin.

A person must not, having himself received the remission of

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sin by believing that Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation through the cross and the resurrection, teach others that although original sin has been remitted, the sins they commit daily must be washed away by prayers of repentance. To do so is the same as the attitude of the wicked servant who enjoyed the forgiveness of ten thousand talents for himself while demanding a hundred denarii from his fellow servant. The one who has received the remission of sin must not hide or alter the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but must preach it just as it is, that God removed all the sins of the past, the present, and the future once and for all.

The last verse is not a formula of salvation by works, as though a person could first obtain salvation from God only by forgiving others. Forgiveness is not the price that buys the remission of sin but the fruit that comes out of the faith that has received the remission of sin. If a person continually hates his brother and insists on revenge while claiming that he himself has received the full remission of sin from God, that person must earnestly examine what gospel he believes.

To believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to believe the fact that God completely removed my sin. That faith makes us see the fact that Jesus took on the sins of others also. Therefore the one who believes the gospel does not try to hold on to the sin of another and judge it to the end, but can lay it down before the cross of Jesus.

Even so, this does not mean that all the people of the world automatically enjoy the remission of sin. Jesus took on the sins of all people and completed salvation, but each person must believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart. Because the one who refuses the gospel does not receive the salvation that was accomplished for him, he remains under the

condemnation of sin.

That Jesus said to forgive up to seventy times seven teaches that forgiveness is not something we may choose according to our feelings, but a way of life that comes out of the gospel. We cannot forgive infinitely by our own strength, but when we remember the fact that the Lord forgave all my sins, which were like ten thousand talents, we can forgive again.

In the end the center of this parable is the fact that we were first forgiven an immeasurable debt of sin by God. God had compassion on us, who had no ability to pay, and solved all our sins through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and through the cross and the resurrection. The one who believes this grace does not hold on to his brother's faults and count them; while not turning away from truth and responsibility, he must throw away revenge and forgive from the heart. He must also pass on to other souls, just as it is, the gospel of the complete remission of sin that he received, so that they too may be forgiven all their sins, like ten thousand talents. To forgive a brother from the heart and to share with other souls the gospel of the water and the Spirit that one has received is the fitting life of a person who has received a great remission of sin. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 18

[Question] 1. What is the qualification of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven that Matthew Chapter 18 teaches?

The qualification and the appearance of a citizen of the kingdom of heaven that appear in Matthew Chapter 18 can be summed up as follows.

"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3–4)

A citizen of the kingdom of heaven is a person who casts away pride, turns, humbles himself like a little child, and believes in Jesus. He must also receive the one whose faith is weak, and must not look down on him or make him stumble, and he must resolutely cast away whatever causes him to sin. He must count even one lost soul as precious, admonish with love a brother who has sinned and restore him, and pray in one accord with those who believe.

Above all, as one who has had the whole of his great debt of sin forgiven by God, he must also forgive the faults of others from the heart.

"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matthew 18:35)

The citizen of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew Chapter 18

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is a person who humbly believes in Jesus, keeps far from sin, counts the little ones precious, restores his brother with love, and forgives from the heart.

[Question] 2. Matthew 18:1, out of what kind of heart did it come that the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

The motive with which the disciples asked such a question was that they had a spirit of rivalry and a desire for honor, each wanting to rise to a higher position than the others.

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'" (Matthew 18:1)

The Gospel of Mark makes known that they had disputed among themselves on the road about who was the greatest.

"But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest." (Mark 9:34)

At that time the disciples understood the kingdom of heaven as though it were a kingdom of this world, and their interest lay in who would obtain a higher position and authority in that kingdom. Jesus, who knew this pride and rivalry, set a little child before them and taught that in the kingdom of heaven the one who humbles himself is the great one.

[Question] 3. Matthew 18:1, what was wrong with the heart of the disciples that argued over who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

In the heart of the disciples there was pride and rivalry, by which they wanted to exalt themselves and become greater than

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others. They thought of the kingdom of heaven as a kingdom of this world, and their interest lay in obtaining a high position and authority.

"And said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 18:3–4)

Jesus told them to turn from such a heart and to humble themselves like little children. Greatness in the kingdom of heaven does not lie in becoming higher than others, but in acknowledging one's own lack and humbly relying on the Lord.

[Question] 4. Matthew 18:2–4, explain the teaching of Jesus given through a little child.

When the disciples asked who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus called a little child and set him in the midst of the disciples. And He said that unless the disciples were converted and became like little children they could not enter the kingdom of heaven, and that the one who humbles himself like a little child is the great one in the kingdom of heaven.

"Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 18:2–4)

The disciples were thinking about who was higher and greater even in the kingdom of heaven. In their hearts there was a spirit of rivalry and self-boasting, by which they wanted to be

lifted higher than others and to be recognized. Jesus taught them to turn from such a heart and to humble themselves like little children. The great one in the kingdom of heaven is not a person who rules over many people or boasts of his own ability and merit.

To be like a little child does not mean to become a person without thought or without discernment. Neither does it mean that a little child has no sin at all. Just as a little child relies on the word and the help of his parents, it means to acknowledge one's own lack and inability before God and to have a faith that purely receives the Word of God.

A person who is like a little child does not lift his own thoughts and stubbornness above the Word, even when the Word of God differs from his own thinking. He receives that Word as true because God has spoken it. On the contrary, a person who keeps doubting the Word of God with his own thoughts and tries to believe only the parts he can understand is not a person who has humbled himself before God.

Such faith is needed also in the matter of a sinner entering the kingdom of heaven. A man cannot remove the sin of his heart by his own good deeds or religious merit. He must acknowledge that he cannot be saved by his own strength, and receive like a little child the Word of the salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished.

Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the judgment of sin, and He rose from the dead and completed our salvation. When God says that He has removed all our sins through this gospel of the water and the Spirit, to lay down one's own thoughts or previously learned doctrines and to believe that Word just as it

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is—this is the faith of a little child.

A man must not receive only one part of the Word that Jesus removed all sins by His baptism and by the blood of the cross while rejecting the other part. Only when he receives into his heart the work of salvation that the Lord has done, just as the Word says, can he receive the remission of all his sins and enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore the faith of a little child is not a small and insignificant faith, but the most precious faith, by which one receives the remission of sin, everlasting life, and all the spiritual blessings of God.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, the heart of a little child is still needed. A person who has been saved does not boast of his own experience or of the number of years he has believed, but still acknowledges that he can do nothing without the help of the Lord. Even when he meets difficult matters he does not rely on his own means alone, but asks God for help and lives believing the Word that the Lord helps him.

Therefore the teaching of Jesus given through a little child is that we should turn from our own thoughts and righteousness and from the heart that wants to be lifted high, and humble ourselves before God and purely believe His Word and His salvation. The one who thus believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit just as the Word says, and who even after being saved relies on the Lord and serves others with a lowly heart, is the great one in the kingdom of heaven.

[Question] 5. Matthew 18:4, what does Jesus call the humility by which one becomes great in the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus said that the one who humbles himself like a little child

is the great one in the kingdom of heaven.

"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:4)

To humble oneself like a little child does not mean to degrade oneself as a worthless person, or to act weakly before others in every case. It means not to put forward one's own thoughts, righteousness, and merit before God, but to acknowledge one's own lack and inability and to rely on the Word and the help of God.

A little child naturally acknowledges the fact that he cannot live without the protection and the provision of his parents. In the same way, a person who humbles himself acknowledges that he cannot escape from sin or enter the kingdom of heaven by his own strength, and he receives the salvation that God has bestowed just as the Word says. Even when the Word of God differs from his own thinking, he does not lift his own judgment higher, but believes because God has spoken.

Humility before the gospel of the water and the Spirit is also like this. It is to believe just as it is written that Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, and that after receiving the judgment of those sins on the cross He rose again and completed our salvation. The one who does not put forward his own good deeds or repeated prayers of repentance and religious merit as the ground of salvation, but relies only on the salvation the Lord has accomplished, is the person who has humbled himself before God.

Such humility must continue even after one has received the remission of sin. He must not exalt himself on the ground that he has lived a life of faith for a long time or has done many works, but must acknowledge that he is still a person like a little child who needs the help of the Lord. He must also not look down on

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the weak within the church, but must serve with a lowly heart the work entrusted to him.

Therefore the humility by which one becomes great in the kingdom of heaven is not a hypocrisy that makes one appear lowly before people, but a laying down of one's own thoughts and righteousness before God and a whole-hearted believing in and relying on His Word and His salvation. Such a person does not boast of himself but boasts of the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ has accomplished, and lives a life of serving other souls.

[Question] 6. Matthew 18:5, toward whom does the Word "*Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me*" mean that we are to show such a welcome?

To receive one little child in the name of Jesus is to receive Jesus Himself.

"Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me." (Matthew 18:5)

This means that to count precious and to receive a small and weak person who believes in Jesus is to honor and to serve Jesus Himself.

[Question] 7. Matthew 18:6, what punishment does Jesus say follows a person who makes one of the little ones who believe in Him stumble?

A person who makes one little one who believes in Jesus stumble receives a very fearful judgment. Jesus said that it would

be better for such a person to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the deep sea.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6)

This is not a command actually to punish anyone in that manner, but a Word that emphasizes how great a sin it is before God to cause a believing person to fall into sin or to depart from faith.

[Question] 8. Matthew 18:7, what does the Word *"For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!"* mean?

In this world that has fallen through sin, things arise that tempt people and make them fall. But God surely holds responsible the person who has made another stumble.

"Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:7)

God is not One who forces anyone to do evil. He knows that things which cause stumbling will come, and He permits them, but He does not remove the responsibility of the person who has done that evil. Therefore this Word shows the will of God, who counts the believing little ones precious, and His providence, by which He judges righteously the one who makes them fall into sin.

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[Question] 9. Matthew 18:8, 9, what does Jesus say concerning a hand or a foot or an eye that causes one to sin?

Jesus said that if a hand or a foot or an eye causes one to sin, he should cut it off or pluck it out. This means to cut off resolutely the cause of sin and the temptation to it.

"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire." (Matthew 18:8–9)

This Word does not mean actually to mutilate the body, but is a strong teaching to cast away boldly the habits, desires, and surroundings that make one commit sin, however precious one may count them. For everlasting life is more precious than any benefit or pleasure of this world.

[Question] 10. Matthew 18:10, how does the passage make known the reason why not even one of the little ones is to be taken lightly?

The reason why the little ones are not to be despised is that the angels who watch over them always see the face of God in heaven.

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)

This means that even a person who appears small and weak

in this world is counted precious by God and is under His protection. Therefore those who believe must not judge or disregard people by their outward appearance or position, but must treat them as souls whom God counts precious.

[Question] 11. Matthew 18:12, 13, what is another reason why the little ones are to be counted precious?

Another reason why the little ones are not to be despised is that God does not give up even one soul that has gone astray, but seeks and saves it, and rejoices greatly when He finds that soul again.

"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray." (Matthew 18:12–13)

Even one person who in the sight of men is small and of no account is to God a precious soul that cannot be lost. Therefore we too must not despise the little ones, but must care for them with love.

[Question] 12. Matthew 18:14, what does the passage say is the will of the Father in heaven toward the little ones?

"Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. " (Matthew 18:14)

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The will of God concerning the little ones is that not even one of them should be lost, but that all of them should be saved.

Even if the number of those who gather is small, when they become one in heart with Jesus at the center, the Lord is together with them. The true center of the church is not the number of people or the form, but Jesus Christ alone.

God counts precious even one small and weak soul. Therefore those who believe must not despise the little ones or make them stumble, and if anyone has gone astray they must seek him with love and restore him.

[Question] 13. Matthew 18:15–17, how does the passage record that we are to deal with a brother when he has sinned?

When there is a brother who has sinned, we must first meet him alone and admonish him for his fault. If he does not listen, we are to take one or two others and admonish him again, and if he still does not listen, we are to tell it to the church. If he refuses even the word of the church, he is to be regarded like a heathen and a tax collector.

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:15–17)

The purpose of this process is not to accuse the brother publicly or to punish him, but to help him turn from his fault and

be restored. To *"let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector"* means that he can no longer be acknowledged as a member of the normal fellowship of the church.

[Question] 14. Matthew 18:15, what attitude of heart is needed when one meets a brother who has sinned and admonishes him alone?

When one meets alone and admonishes a brother who has sinned, what is needed is not a heart that wants to condemn him or put him to shame, but a heart that wants to make him aware of his fault with love, so that he may turn and be restored.

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." (Matthew 18:15)

That Jesus told us first to meet him alone means that we are not to spread the fault of our brother to others or to accuse him publicly, but to admonish him quietly while respecting his person. The one who admonishes must also remember that he himself has received the remission of sin by the mercy of God, and so must not put forward his own righteousness, but must speak on the ground of the Word of God with a meek and humble heart.

The purpose of admonition is not to defeat the brother or to punish him, but to have *"gained your brother."* Therefore we must not stop at pointing out his fault, but must admonish him with a heart that longs for him to acknowledge his fault, turn, and be restored before God and within the church.

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[Question] 15. Matthew 18:16, what does it mean to take one or two others along and admonish the brother?

When one has met a brother who has sinned and admonished him alone and yet he does not listen, to take one or two more along is in order to confirm the facts through objective witnesses and to establish every word justly.

"But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'" (Matthew 18:16)

The one or two others do not go along merely to take the side of the one who admonishes or to drive the brother into a corner. They hear the words of both sides and discern the facts of the matter, and they serve as witnesses so that the brother may not be condemned by personal feelings or by a one-sided claim. Moreover, as several people admonish him together with love, the brother is given another opportunity to become aware of his fault and to turn.

Therefore the purpose of taking one or two others along does not lie in accusing the brother publicly or punishing him. It is to handle the whole matter justly within the Word of God and the order of the church, and to turn the brother who has sinned so as to gain him again and restore him.

[Question] 16. Matthew 18:18, what does the Word mean that whatever is bound and loosed on earth is so done in heaven as well?

After Jesus had spoken of the work of admonishing a brother who has sinned and of the way the church of God is to handle

that matter, He said that what the church binds and looses on earth is so done in heaven as well.

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18)

This Word does not mean that the church or a pastor may condemn people at will or loose them from sin according to his own thoughts and feelings. The only One who can actually remove the sin of man and save the sinner is God. The authority the church possesses is the authority to believe and to preach the Word that God has given and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and to discern spiritual matters according to that Word.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross and so received the judgment of sin, and He rose from the dead and completed our salvation. The church of God has been entrusted with the mission of preaching this completed gospel of salvation to sinners.

To loose on earth means that a person who is bound by sin hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit that is preached through the church, believes it in his heart, and receives the remission of all his sins. Because he has believed the Word of salvation that God has appointed, God also acknowledges that faith, and in heaven as well he is acknowledged as a righteous man loosed from sin and as a child of God.

On the contrary, to bind on earth does not mean that the church curses someone out of personal hatred. A person who hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet holds fast to his own thoughts and to mistaken doctrines and does not believe still has sin remaining in his heart. Because he has rejected the

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remission of sin that God has prepared, his state of being bound to sin and judgment continues.

In the context of Matthew Chapter 18, this Word applies also to the work of admonishing a brother who has sinned within the church. First we are to meet that brother alone and admonish him with the Word; if he does not listen, we are to admonish him again together with one or two others; and if he still does not listen, the church must handle the matter officially. The purpose of this whole process is not to condemn the brother and drive him out, but to bring him to acknowledge his fault, to turn, and to be joined to the church again.

The fact that a brother who has received the remission of sin has committed a fault does not mean that the salvation Jesus completed is canceled. He must acknowledge his own fault before God and the church and turn by the Word, but he does not have to receive a new atonement in order to wash that sin away again. Believing in the salvation of the Lord who has already borne all his sins, he must come back from the wrong road and restore right fellowship with the church.

To hear the admonition of the church, acknowledge one's own fault, and turn is connected with the work of being loosed on earth. Receiving the Word, he comes out of his wrong conduct and stubbornness and recovers his fellowship with the church. But if he continues to reject the Word and the admonition of the church, the church must judge that he is at present outside the faith and the order of the church. This is the state of being bound by the Word and the admonition of the church.

It is not, however, that every human decision the church makes is automatically acknowledged in heaven. The judgment of the church must be grounded on the Word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and it must be made out of the

love that seeks to gain the brother and to give life to his soul. Decisions made to protect personal feelings, interests, or the authority of a leader cannot be called the authority to bind and loose that God has given.

Therefore the Word that what is bound and loosed on earth is so done in heaven as well means that Jesus Christ has entrusted to the church the gospel of salvation and the authority of spiritual discernment. With this authority the church is not to rule over people, but is to loose sinners by the gospel, to admonish with the Word a brother who is on a wrong road and restore him, and to keep the faith and the order of the church according to the will of God.

[Question] 17. Matthew 18:19, what does the passage record that God does when two people on earth agree together and ask for anything?

The principle of prayer in one accord is that when two or more people make their hearts and their purpose one within the will of God and ask together, God the Father in heaven accomplishes that prayer for them.

"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:19)

To be in one accord is not merely for several people to repeat the same request, but to seek the will of God in peace with one another and to pray with one heart. This Word does not mean that God accomplishes whatever men desire, but that God hears the prayer that those who believe offer as they become one according to the will of God.

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[Question] 18. Matthew 18:20, what does it mean that two or three gather together in the name of Jesus?

That two or three gather in the name of Jesus does not mean only that a few people gather in one place and call upon the name of Jesus. It means that those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and obey His Word and His will are joined together in the same faith to worship and to pray, and gather in order to serve the church and the gospel.

"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

Here the words *"in My name"* mean that they gather not in order to accomplish their own desires or human purposes, but in order to accomplish the will of Jesus. That is, those who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit join their hearts together with Jesus at the center, discuss the work of the church according to the Word of God, and stand together for the salvation of souls and the preaching of the gospel.

This Word is directly connected with the teaching about admonishing a brother when he has sinned, about establishing the evidence of two or three witnesses, and about the church judging according to the Word of God. Therefore that two or three gather in the name of Jesus does not mean that they judge another person by personal feelings or by the claim of the majority. It means that they admonish with love in order to set the brother right and gain him again by the standard of the Word of God, and that they are joined to the will of the church.

This Word is also a promise concerning prayer in one accord. When the saints gather their hearts and pray in order to accomplish the will of God, Jesus is together with them, and God

the Father hears their prayer and works. Therefore the prayer and the gathering of the church are not a religious form or ceremony, but an actual work of faith in which Jesus is present.

That Jesus is together with them does not mean that He appears bodily before their eyes, but that He is among them by the Word and by the Spirit, and that He leads them and uses them. Whether the number of those who gather is many or few is not the essential thing. The essential thing is whether they believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and are joined as one within the Word and the will of Jesus.

Therefore that two or three gather in the name of Jesus means that the saints who have received the remission of sin join their faith and their hearts together with the will of the Lord at the center, and worship and pray, and build one another up and preach the gospel. Jesus is surely together with such a gathering, and through them He accomplishes the will of God.

[Question] 19. Matthew 18:21, what did Peter want to know concerning the matter of forgiving his brother?

The forgiveness Peter asked about concerned how many times he must forgive the fault of his brother when that brother has sinned against him.

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'" (Matthew 18:21)

Peter asked whether it was enough to forgive up to seven times. He knew the fact that he had to forgive, but he wanted to set a fixed number and a limit to forgiveness. Jesus, however, taught that forgiveness is not an act of counting a number of

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times, but an attitude of heart that keeps on giving.

[Question] 20. Matthew 18:22, state the answer of Jesus concerning the number of times of forgiveness that Peter asked about.

Jesus told Peter to forgive not only up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

"Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" (Matthew 18:22)

This does not mean to forgive up to exactly four hundred and ninety times, but to keep on forgiving without counting the number of times or setting a limit. Peter thought that forgiving seven times was great generosity, but Jesus taught that the one who has received the remission of sin from God must forgive his brother to the end.

[Question] 21. Matthew 18:23–35, explain in summary the parable of the servant in debt that Jesus spoke.

To Peter, who asked how many times he must forgive his brother, Jesus said that he must forgive up to seventy times seven, and then He told the parable of the servant in debt.

A certain king, when he settled accounts with his servants, had brought to him a servant who owed ten thousand talents. That servant had no ability at all to pay the debt. At first the king commanded that the servant's own body and his wife and his children and all he possessed be sold so that the debt might be paid. When the servant fell down and begged him to have

patience, the king had compassion on him and released him, and forgave him the whole of that great debt.

"Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." (Matthew 18:27)

That servant, however, went out and met a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. He took him by the throat and pressed him to pay the debt. Though the fellow servant fell down and begged him to have patience, he would not allow it, but shut him up in prison until he should pay all the debt.

The other servants who saw this scene were greatly grieved and told the king all that had happened. The king called again the servant who had been forgiven ten thousand talents, and rebuked him, saying that just as he himself had had pity on him, so he also ought to have had pity on his fellow servant. And calling him a wicked servant, he delivered him to the jailers until he should pay all the debt. As Jesus finished this parable, He warned that each one must forgive his brother from the heart.

In the parable the king represents God, and the debt of ten thousand talents represents all the sins that a man has committed before God and cannot pay. A sinner cannot pay the debt of sin by his own good deeds or prayers or ascetic practices. The hundred denarii represents the faults that others have committed against us, a very small debt when compared with the debt of sin that God has forgiven us.

God did not simply overlook our sins without any ground. Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross and so paid the whole wages of sin, and by rising from the dead He gave us the complete remission of sin. This is the way in which God forgave the debt of the sinner, a debt like ten thousand talents.

Therefore this parable does not mean that we obtain salvation

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by the act of forgiving our brother. We must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished and have the whole debt of our sin forgiven. And the one who has actually received that great mercy into his heart must remember that he himself was originally a sinner who could not pay, and must forgive the faults and the wrongs of others.

Therefore the parable of the servant in debt is a teaching that the one who has had an immeasurably great debt of sin forgiven by God must not seize upon the small faults of his brother and condemn him, but must forgive and love his brother from his heart with the mercy he himself has received.

[Question] 22. Matthew 18:23, what class of people does *"his servants"* refer to?

In the parable, *"his servants"* refers to the officials or officers who managed the property or the taxes of the king and were responsible to settle accounts with him. Rather than mere household servants, they may be seen as the class of officials who were entrusted with the affairs of the king.

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants." (Matthew 18:23)

Spiritually the king represents God, and the servants represent those who must settle the account of their own lives before God. Therefore this passage carries the meaning that every man must give an account of what he has received from God and of what he has done.

[Question] 23. Matthew 18:24, explain what ten thousand talents amounted to in the money value of that time.

At that time one talent generally corresponded to about six thousand denarii. Ten thousand talents therefore amounted to about sixty million denarii, and if one denarius is reckoned as a day's wage, it was an enormous sum that a man would have to work about a hundred and sixty thousand years to earn.

"And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents." (Matthew 18:24)

Jesus was not trying to have anyone calculate the exact amount, but was speaking of an enormous debt that a man could never pay. Man cannot settle by his own effort the debt of sin heaped up before God, but Jesus completely removed all those sins by the baptism He received from John, by the cross, and by His resurrection.

[Question] 24. Matthew 18:25, what command did the master first give to the servant who could not pay the great debt?

When the servant in debt had no ability to pay, the master first commanded that his body and his wife and his children and all he possessed be sold so that the debt might be paid. But when the servant fell down and begged him to have patience, the master had compassion on him and released him, and forgave him the whole of the debt.

"But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before

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him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." (Matthew 18:25–27)

God in His mercy and grace has remitted the whole debt of sin that man could not pay.

[Question] 25. Matthew 18:26, 27, how did the servant who had no ability to pay come to have his debt forgiven?

The servant who had no ability to pay the debt of ten thousand talents fell down and bowed before his master and begged him to have patience. He said that if he were given time he would pay the whole debt, but in reality he was a man who could not pay that enormous debt no matter how much time was given him.

"The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt." (Matthew 18:26–27)

The master did not remove the debt because he trusted the servant's ability to repay or his promise for the future. Out of compassion that had pity on the servant he released him and forgave the whole debt of ten thousand talents. The servant did not pay a part of the debt nor prove that he was qualified to have it forgiven. He was set free entirely by the grace of his master.

In this parable the debt of ten thousand talents represents all the sins that man has committed before God. Man cannot pay the debt of sin by good deeds, by the works of the law, by tears, by ascetic practices, or by repeated prayers of repentance. What the sinner must do is not to claim that he can settle the problem

of sin if he tries a little harder, but to acknowledge his own condition, in which he can pay nothing, and to ask for the mercy of God.

God, however, did not overlook the debt of the sinner without any price. Jesus Christ bore in his place the wages of sin that the sinner had to pay. Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He was nailed to the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the whole punishment of sin, and He rose from the dead and completed our salvation.

To the sinner the remission of sin was given without any price, but Jesus paid that price with His own life. Therefore the forgiving of the debt of sin is not something obtained by a man promising to do well or paying off the debt little by little through a good life. It is received by believing in one's heart the fact that Jesus Christ has paid the whole wages of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore the servant who had no ability to pay had his debt forgiven not because of his own ability or merit, but because of the compassion and the grace of his master. In the same way we too must cast away the thought of paying the debt of sin by our own strength, and when we believe the remission of sin that Jesus Christ has completed, we are made completely free from all sin.

[Question] 26. Matthew 18:28, how great is the difference between a hundred denarii and ten thousand talents?

One denarius corresponded to the wage of one laborer for

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one day at that time, so a hundred denarii was the wage a man could receive for working about a hundred days.

"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'" (Matthew 18:28)

A hundred denarii was not a light sum either, but compared with ten thousand talents it is only about one six-hundred-thousandth of it. Through this great difference Jesus taught the fact that, compared with our sins that God has wholly forgiven, the wrongs that others have committed against us are very small.

[Question] 27. Matthew 18:34, what teaching does the delivering of the forgiven servant to the jailers give us?

The servant who had been forgiven the debt of ten thousand talents had no pity on his fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii, but shut him up in prison until he should pay the debt. When the master came to know of this, he was greatly angered, and he rebuked that servant and delivered him to the jailers.

"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him." (Matthew 18:34)

This event gives us the lesson that a person who has received the great mercy of God must also show mercy and forgiveness to the brother who has wronged him. Our sins against God cannot be paid by human strength, like a debt of ten thousand talents, but the wrongs that others have committed against us are, in comparison, like a hundred denarii. Therefore a person who

has received the remission of sin remembers the grace he has received and does not hold on to his brother's faults to the end and condemn him.

God has completely settled all our sins within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received the sins of the whole world passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He was judged on the cross, shedding His blood, and by rising from the dead He completed our salvation. The one who believes this gospel in his heart knows that the debt of sin he could never have paid has all been forgiven him by the grace of God.

To forgive a brother is not to acknowledge his fault as right or to condone his sin. It is to cast away the heart that hates and condemns him, and to desire that he turn from his fault and be restored. The act of forgiving a brother is not a condition or a price for obtaining salvation, but a fruit of faith that appears in a person who has already received the remission of sin from God.

Therefore the end of the servant who was delivered to the jailers gives us the solemn lesson that a person who has received the grace of God must not forget that grace and act without mercy toward others. A saint who has received the remission of sin remembers the mercy he has received, and forgives and loves his brother from the heart.

[Question] 28. Matthew 18:34, 35, what does the end of the servant who had a great debt forgiven and yet showed no mercy show about God's rule?

The servant who had a great debt forgiven and yet showed no mercy to another received the wrath of his master and was delivered to the jailers until he should pay all the debt.

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"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matthew 18:34–35)

This end shows that within the rule of God there are both mercy and righteousness. God is the God of mercy, who has pity on a sinner who has no ability to pay and forgives the debt of sin. At the same time God is One who judges righteously the man who despises the grace he has received and acts without mercy toward others.

God does not acknowledge a forgiveness that is spoken only with the lips. God requires that we engrave upon our hearts the mercy we have received and forgive our brother from the heart. The conduct of the servant who was forgiven ten thousand talents and yet did not forgive his fellow servant who owed a hundred denarii was a wicked act, in which he did not perceive the compassion of his master and made light of that grace.

This Word does not mean that a man obtains the remission of sin from God by the act of forgiving his brother. The remission of sin from God is received not by the works of man but by believing the salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished. Yet a person who has truly received the mercy of God into his heart shows to his brother also the grace he himself has received. A hardened attitude that hates and condemns a brother to the end and refuses mercy is an attitude contrary to the grace of God.

Therefore this parable declares the fact that the righteous judgment of God follows the one who despises His grace. God has boundless pity on sinners, but He never counts lightly the evil of one who makes light of that mercy and acts without mercy toward others.

[Question] 29. Matthew 18:35, what warning did He give to the person who does not forgive from the heart?

Jesus warned that if we do not forgive our brother from the heart, God our Father in heaven will also deal as solemnly with the one who does not forgive as with the servant who had no mercy.

"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matthew 18:35)

True forgiveness is not merely saying outwardly that all is well, but letting go of a brother's fault from the heart, remembering the mercy one has received from God. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The one who believes the Word like a little child

< Matthew 18:1-10, 12-14 >

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! 'If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. 'Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. 'What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not

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leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

The way that He showed to the disciples who wanted to be exalted

The disciples asked Jesus who was the great one in the kingdom of heaven. In their interest there was contained the human heart that wants to be lifted higher than others and to be recognized. Jesus did not compare who had done more work. He called a little child and set him in their midst, and He said that unless they first became like little children they could not enter the kingdom of heaven.

When people speak of a great faith, they easily think of a conspicuous ability or of many achievements. But the great one in the kingdom of God is not the one who displays himself greatly, but the one who humbles himself like a little child. This does not mean to act childishly or to throw away discernment. It means not to place one's own judgment above the Word of God, and to acknowledge that one is a sinner who can boast of nothing before God.

A little child cannot live by himself if he has no parents. In the same way, unless the Lord helps us, we can neither escape from sin nor live by faith. The one who knows this fact does not boast of his own ability, but relies on the Lord. When God speaks, he acknowledges that His Word is right rather than his own thought. This lowering of oneself is the starting point of faith.

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Underneath the question of the disciples there lay the thought that even in the kingdom of heaven the order of rank would be settled according to power and merit, just as in the order of this world. They were comparing who had followed the Lord longer, who had been entrusted with more important work, and who was closer to the Lord. But Jesus corrected their very act of comparing. The door by which one enters the kingdom of heaven does not lie in exalting oneself, but in turning and becoming like a little child. As long as a person calculates his own merit and compares himself with others, it is hard for him to receive wholly the grace that God has bestowed.

The turning of which the Lord spoke is not a matter of correcting a few actions. It is to turn away from the heart that had made one's own thought the absolute standard, and to make the Word of God the standard. One must lay down the thought that he is wise and good and that, if he makes an effort, he can also solve the problem of sin. Before God we are beings who cannot even keep our own life, who do not know what will happen tomorrow, and who cannot pay by ourselves even the wages of one sin that we have committed. To acknowledge this actual state of oneself is to humble oneself like a little child.

The one who has been humbled can ask the Lord for help. The one who trusts in his own ability may seem to pray, but he has already set up his own plan and conclusion in his heart. But the one who is like a little child knows that he has no wisdom and no ability, and so he listens to the Word and seeks the guidance of the church. He acknowledges that unless the Lord supplies, he can neither serve the gospel nor go forward even one step by faith. Such dependence is not weakness, but the attitude of faith that actually lets God work.

A simple and honest heart before the Word

The faith that is like a little child is the faith that receives just as it is the work that the Lord has accomplished. Even while people hear the Word of God, they try to reinterpret the Word by putting their own experience and doctrine first. But the remission of sin is not a conclusion that human wisdom produces. If God has spoken of the way in which He has saved sinners, we must humble our hearts before that Word.

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* This word means that Jesus, through the baptism that He received from John the Baptist, fulfilled the righteousness of God by taking upon Himself all the sins of mankind. Afterward John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus, saying, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).*

The one who believes the Word like a little child does not limit the salvation of God by his own thought, asking how sins that have not yet been committed could be taken upon Himself. He believes just as it is the Word that Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, that He bore that sin and was judged by shedding His blood on the cross, and that He rose again from the dead. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The water is the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood is the judgment that He received on the cross while bearing the sin of the world, and the Spirit bears witness that this salvation is the truth accomplished by the righteousness of God. The one who believes this gospel does not try to wash away his sins by his own deeds and prayers of repentance. He receives into his heart the salvation that Jesus

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completed, has his sins remitted, and receives the Holy Spirit as the gift of God.

The greatest faith for us is not the faith that thinks we ourselves can do something remarkable. It is the faith that believes without doubting the Word that the Lord has removed all our sins. Our life of faith also must start from here. When a person thinks that he is strong he does not pray, but when, like a little child, he acknowledges his own lack, he naturally comes to ask for the help of the Lord. Through such faith the Lord leads us and accomplishes His work.

The faith that is like a little child is not a blind attitude that believes any word at all without discernment. The words of men and religious traditions must without fail be discerned by the testimony of the Bible. But before the fact of salvation that the Word of God proclaims, such a person does not insist on his own thought. If the Son of God took upon Himself the sin of the world by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the cross, then whatever his own feelings may be, he receives that Word as true. This is purity before the Word.

People say that they cannot understand how Jesus could take upon Himself even the sins of one who had not yet been born. But to God, all the sins of the past, the present, and the future are contained in the sin of the world. The sin that Jesus took upon Himself by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist was not only the sins of the people of that time, but all the sins that would be committed from Adam down to the last man. The one who lays down the limit of his own understanding before the Word that the Lord bore the sin of the world is the one who has a faith like that of a little child.

The baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the cross are not separated from each other. Just as

the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament shed its blood after it had received sins passed on to it by the laying on of hands, so Jesus received the sins of mankind passed on to Him by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist, and He bore those sins and went to the cross. The baptism is the righteousness of God by which He took upon Himself sin, and the blood of the cross is the judgment by which He paid the penalty of the sin that He had taken upon Himself. The resurrection shows that all this salvation was accomplished perfectly. The Holy Spirit bears witness that this gospel is not a theory of men, but the truth that God has accomplished.

When one believes this gospel, the record of sin disappears from his heart. The remission of sin does not mean that one obtains a perfect flesh that does not commit sin. The flesh is still lacking and can do wrong, but one's conscience becomes clean before God by believing that Jesus has already taken even those sins upon Himself and been judged for them. When he finds a fault he honestly acknowledges it and turns from it, but he does not try to pay the wages of sin with prayers of repentance in order to obtain the remission of sin again. He relies all the more on the righteousness of the Lord who has bestowed a perfect salvation.

In this way the Holy Spirit dwells as the gift of God in the heart that has received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. One has not received the Holy Spirit because he has cried out loudly or has experienced some special emotion. The Holy Spirit bears witness to the salvation of Jesus, causes those who believe to call God their Father, and leads them to live by believing the Word. The faith that is like a little child is needed not only at the time of salvation, but continually in the life of faith that follows. When we rely on the Word that the Holy Spirit makes us hear through

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the church rather than on our own wisdom, our faith grows.

That our faith grows does not mean that we cast away the heart of a little child and become independent strong ones. Rather, it means that as time passes we know more deeply that we can do nothing without the grace of the Lord. At first we rely on the Lord in small matters, and as we experience His help according to His Word, we come to be able to entrust greater matters to Him as well. The boldness of faith does not arise from the conviction that we ourselves are strong, but from the experience that the Lord who helps us in our lack is faithful.

The fearful sin of making a little one stumble

Jesus very sternly warned against the work of making one of the little ones who believe in Him stumble. Here the little ones do not mean only those whose position in the world is low. They refer to those who have cast away their own righteousness and believe in the righteousness of God, the children of God who have purely received the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have had their sins remitted. The Lord said not to despise even one among them.

To make a little one stumble is not merely a matter of making his heart feel hurt. It is to make him fall from the faith that believes in the righteousness of God, or to teach him wrongly so that he cannot believe in the gospel of the remission of sin. If one teaches that Jesus removed only the original sin and that personal sins must be washed away day by day with prayers of repentance, then a person will remain a sinner continually even while believing in Jesus. This is to cover up the salvation that Jesus completed by the baptism He

received from John the Baptist and by the cross, and to hold the soul in the prison of sin.

The word in which the Lord said to cut off the hand and the foot and to pluck out the eye is not a command to mutilate the body literally. It is a stern word telling us not to take lightly the sin and the falsehood that lead a soul to destruction. If our desire or our stubbornness goes against the gospel and casts down another soul, we must resolutely throw it away. We must count the life of one soul more precious than our own face and profit.

The hand and the foot and the eye represent the channels through which we act, follow, and look in the world. However precious the honor and the material things of the world and the desires of the flesh may seem, if they make us abandon the Word of truth, we must cut them off. People cannot easily give up what is profitable to them, but there is nothing more precious than eternal life. The Lord teaches us that it is better to keep the gospel even at a loss than to keep the comfort of the flesh and have the soul perish.

The words and the actions of those who have been entrusted with the gospel in particular have a great influence on other souls. Even a word that one himself thought nothing of can give a deep wound and confusion to a person whose faith is young. To boast of one's own righteousness, to demand of people loyalty rather than the gospel, or to expose the weakness of a believer and put him to shame can make a little one stumble. Just as much as preaching the truth rightly, the attitude with which we treat souls also needs compassion and patience.

The word that says not to despise the little ones does not mean to acknowledge as right every thought of one whose faith is weak. A wrong thought must be corrected by the Word. But

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we must look upon that person as a soul whom the Lord purchased by shedding His blood, and we must wait and serve him until he is restored. The church is not a place where only the strong remain, but a place where young faith is protected and grows while learning the Word. To disregard one person becomes a taking lightly of the will of the Lord who counts him precious.

The heart of the Father who seeks the lost sheep

Jesus said that if one out of a hundred sheep goes astray, the shepherd goes to seek that one. And after he finds it, he rejoices more over that one than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. God does not give up even one lost soul. That does not mean, however, that the ninety-nine are not important.

In the world there are many people who outwardly seem not to seek God. But among them there are souls who, not knowing why they were born and where they are going, seek the truth deep in their hearts. There are people who, even after a long religious life, suffer because their sins have not disappeared, and who long to meet the salvation that God has completed. It is exactly such lost sheep that God seeks.

The church that has received the remission of sin must also have this heart. It must count the work of preaching the gospel of life to one lost soul more precious than being recognized by many people. Not only preaching the gospel by meeting people directly, but also preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit through books and various media, is the work of the shepherd who seeks one soul. Even if countless people pass it by, if one person who had been seeking the truth receives the Word and has his sins remitted, God rejoices greatly.

We must not despise those who are lost on the ground that we are the sheep who have already been found. We too would have been people who wandered in sin and perished if the Lord had not sought us. That we have humbled our hearts like little children and have come to believe the Word is also the grace of God. Therefore the one who has been saved does not boast of himself, but is long-suffering and waits, and serves so that other souls may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

A sheep that has gone astray is not a beast that is skilled at finding the shepherd and coming back by itself. It cannot discern the way, and it easily goes deeper into danger. A sinner also cannot return to God by his own wisdom. Even though he searches out many religions and philosophies and strives to live a good life, if he does not know where his sins were transferred to and how they were judged, the sin in his heart remains just as it is. Just as a shepherd goes out to seek his sheep, God first sends the Word of the gospel and seeks lost souls through His workers.

The standard by which God seeks one soul is different from the value of the world. People pay attention to those who have great influence and much ability, but the Lord counts precious even one person whom no one recognizes. Even one who is sick or poor or who has experienced many failures becomes a child of God if he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It was to save that one person that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and shed His blood on the cross. Therefore the church must not judge the value of a soul by a person's appearance and conditions.

The work of seeking the lost sheep is accompanied by waiting and sacrifice. It is not that everyone believes at once because the gospel has been made known to him one time. Those who have long been bound by a wrong doctrine, or

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whose own righteousness is strong, must hear the Word many times. The evangelist must not hastily draw a conclusion, but must calmly explain the same gospel from various angles so that the person may come to realize the righteousness of God. The result is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, but the labor of going out to seek, preaching the Word, and praying is entrusted to the church.

The one who has received the remission of sin must not only go out to seek other souls, but must also care for young faith within the church. He must explain the Word to one who does not understand it well, listen to the story of one who is discouraged, and pray together with those who are in difficulty in their living so that they may not depart from the faith. Such service does not catch the eye well, but in the kingdom of heaven it is precious work. The great one of whom the Lord spoke is not the one who receives the praise of many people, but the one who counts one small soul precious and cares for him.

The labor of preaching the gospel is not an act done in order to complete our salvation. We have already received the remission of sin by believing in the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and in the cross. To seek the lost sheep is for one who has first received that great grace to take part in the heart of the Shepherd. Because we remember that God did not give us up but sought us, we too do not easily give up on other people. The driving force of preaching the gospel is the love and the thankfulness that we have first received, rather than a sense of duty.

The great one in the kingdom of heaven is not one who rules over many people. He is one who believes like a little child in the salvation that Jesus accomplished, counts one little one precious, and gives himself to the work of seeking the lost

sheep. We too must humble our hearts before the Lord and believe the completed gospel. And we must preach this gospel with the heart of the Father who does not want even one soul to be lost.

This is the life of the people of the kingdom of heaven in which the Lord takes pleasure.

The first part of Matthew Chapter 18 teaches that humbling oneself and loving souls come out of one and the same faith. The one who has laid down his own merit and has believed the gospel like a little child cannot despise another believer. It is because he knows that he too was saved wholly by grace. Moreover, such a person cannot be indifferent toward lost souls. It is because he knows the sacrifice that Jesus paid in order to seek him, one single person.

The longer the years of our faith become, the lower we must be. If we disregard young faith on the ground that we know much of the Word and have done much work, we have forgotten the grace of the beginning. We must simply believe the salvation that the Lord has accomplished, ask the Lord for everything we need, and set our hearts on receiving one little one and seeking the lost sheep. God acknowledges such faith as great faith in the kingdom of heaven, and through such people He accomplishes His will, which is that not even one soul should be lost. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Have a faith like that of a little child

< Matthew 18:1-4 >

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"

The faith that goes to the kingdom of heaven

The one who has many thoughts of his own before God is a wicked person. The one who relies on God, believes simply with his heart, and follows the Lord is a person of faith. If it is not so, but one follows the Lord with his own thought rather than with his heart, that in itself is wicked.

When we look at ourselves before God, what can we really do, how upright are we, and are we people who can control ourselves? We are not. Before God there is nothing that we can put forth, neither our thought nor our will nor anything else. Our will also is wrong and our thought also is wrong, and so there is not one thing in us that is upright before God.

Yet what does the Lord say to us? When the disciples

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asked, *"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1),* He said, *"Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 18:2–3).* And He said, *"Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:4).*

Who is great? It is that the one who is like a little child is great. It is that the one who is like a little child enters the kingdom of heaven. It is that the one who humbles himself like a little child is the great one before God. When we look at ourselves before God, only a faith like that of a little child, only that heart like the heart of a little child, is acknowledged, and there is nothing else to be acknowledged. Nothing of our thought or our conduct or our will is acknowledged at all.

What we can put forth before God is nothing but that faith which is like that of a little child. What does this mean? It means that we simply believe, like a little child, that the Lord has saved us. Before God we have nothing but that very tender and feeble faith which is like that of a little child. Yet the Lord, on the contrary, says that it is great.

When we live before God and look back upon ourselves, there is nothing worth putting forth. In some places there are faults, and our thoughts also are not right. But if there is just one thing worth putting forth, it is only that faith which is like that of a little child. That faith is to believe as a matter of my own person that the Lord has removed my sins, and to believe the work that the Lord has done and the work that He will do hereafter.

I also have nothing but this faith which is like that of a little child. As for the rest, I cannot say that I have it. It is because it

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is not perfect. The Lord has saved me. The Lord was baptized by John and had all my sins passed on to Him and took them upon Himself, and He bore those sins and went and shed His blood and died on the cross in my place, and He rose from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of God. This gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which the Lord has removed all my sins—I believe it.

A faith as small as a mustard seed is a great faith

What faith do we have? We have nothing but that faith which is like that of a little child. There is something that the Lord has given to us who are people of faith, and it is exactly a faith as small as a mustard seed. The Lord said, *"If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).* The people of God have nothing else but that faith which, like a little child, purely believes just as it is what the Lord has already accomplished in full.

God has given us that faith which is like that of a little child. There can be nothing else. It is not that we have the ability to do something; we only believe that the Lord has saved us from sin. Who indeed is the great one before God? The one who truly humbles himself and knows himself, and who receives and believes like a little child the work that the Lord has done for us, is the great one in the kingdom of heaven.

The great one before God is not a person of strong might. It is not the one who rolls up his sleeves, lifts a heavy lump of iron with one hand, and swings it who is the great one, but the

one who is like a little child is the great one. What is there that we can do of ourselves before God? If the Lord does not help us, what can we do?

If the Lord does not give us material things, with what can we serve the Lord; and if the Lord had not given us wisdom and knowledge and the faculty of thinking, how could we think, what could we learn, and what talent could we have of ourselves? It is the Lord who has given that strength. Therefore we are ones who are like little children before the Lord. I believe that everyone who has received the remission of sin is one who is like a little child. It is for this reason that we rely on the Lord.

The prayer that is offered with the heart of a little child

When is it that our heart is most at peace and that we have the most faith? It is when we realize all our lack and go before the Lord with the heart of a little child and ask, “Lord, help me; please do this for me and do that for me as well.” When our heart has returned to a heart like that of a little child, prayer before the Lord becomes possible, the faith that God hears that prayer arises within us, and at that time the working of God takes place.

What could we do without the Lord? We are ones who are like little children. We are ones who cannot but act by the help of the Lord, and we are ones who believe like little children that the Lord has saved us. If we take a person apart piece by piece and look at him, the only thing worth taking out from within is a heart like that of a little child, only that believing and receiving of the Word of God simply, like a little child.

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Yet in this world there are many people who do not have a heart like that of a little child. They say that they cannot believe because their heart is not like that of a little child. They say that when they think about it, it does not fit reason at all. They ask whether the Lord really had to save us in that way, whether He really had to use such a method in giving us the spiritual blessings of heaven and making us the children of God, and whether salvation really has to be received in that way. But God has said, *"For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37).*

Is there in your heart a heart like that of a little child? Do you believe that the Lord has saved you from all your sins, and do you believe all the work that He did in order to remove our sins? If so, you and I are ones who are like little children. Does that displease you? It is because we are like little children that we can believe simply and can receive. There is no need to be displeased at this fact that we are like little children.

When I quietly look at myself, and when I quietly look at the saints one by one, we are just like little children. The very fact that we believe the works that the Lord did in order to save us shows that we are already little children. A person who thinks himself clever never believes. He adds to and subtracts from and divides and multiplies the work that the Lord has done, and does not believe the Word of God just as it is. It is because he is not like a little child.

I hope that you will believe the fact that you and I are little children. If we are little children, what follows? We believe in our hearts, like little children, that fact that the Lord has removed all our sins, that work which the Lord has done. If so, we can also entrust the rest of our affairs to the Lord and can ask Him to help us. Only the one who has a heart like that of a little child can pray before the Lord, can ask for His help, and

can live receiving that help.

What does the Lord say? He said, *"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24).* What does this speak of? It is the faith that simply asks like a little child, "Lord, help me; I believe that You will help me; please supply me." It is that when we ask and believe and rely like little children, the Lord works. The Bible speaks much of this faith which is like that of a little child, and it says that such faith is great.

The starting point of faith

That faith which is like that of a little child is what the Lord has given us. Yet we throw it away behind us, saying, "Is this also faith?" and we keep looking for a great faith. Since we look for a great faith, we would put it forth if we had anything to put forth, but however much we think about it, there is nothing to put forth. Do you have a great faith to put forth before God?

We receive the remission of sin by believing in the Lord with a faith like that of a little child; and again with that faith which is like that of a little child we pray and ask before the Lord; and with the heart of a little child we taste the working of the Lord by believing the fact that the Lord helps me. The working of faith is possible only with a heart like that of a little child. Faith does not become a great faith from the beginning.

Whether it has been one year or ten years or twenty years since we were saved, our faith always starts from that state of heart which is like that of a little child. The starting of faith is accomplished in simply believing that fact that the Lord has saved me, and in saying, "God, I can do nothing; please help

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me; I believe in God."

We must not take the starting of faith from a great place. Out of the faith that believes that the Lord has saved me, there arises a faith that can ask for other things as well. The faith that can ask and the faith that can receive do not arise out of some great faith, but arise out of that faith which is like that of a little child. Yet we keep trying to start from a great place. That is why we cannot believe.

The prayer that is offered with the heart of a very little child can ask and can also receive what it has asked. That faith is truly bold. If we simply believe with that faith which is like that of a little child, and starting from there we ask and pray, we come even to the faith that it will surely be accomplished. Therefore we must live the life of faith with a heart like that of a little child.

We must not start from a high heart, or from pride, or from not knowing ourselves. We must start from that salvation by which the Lord saved us, from that faith by which we were saved. If we do not start from there, but start from thinking that we have faith, there are many times when we stumble.

I hope that you will humble your heart. I hope that you will not think that you have faith. I hope that you will make the start of faith from that state which is like that of a little child. When we return to a state of heart like that of a little child, our heart becomes peaceful and bold and courageous, and we come to live a life of righteousness.

To say that one has no faith is because his heart is high. It is because he thinks of himself as one who has a great faith that he says he has no faith. I say it again: the start of faith begins from that faith which believes the Word of God simply like a little child, that is, from that faith by which we were saved. Therefore to say that one has no faith is to say that his heart is

proud. It cannot be that we have no faith. If the Lord has saved us from sin and we believe it, then the start of faith has already begun in our hearts.

Acknowledge the fact that you yourself are a little child

Because the Lord has saved us, even after being saved we can ask for what we truly need, and the faith and the boldness that the Lord will give it arise in us. But to say that we start from a great faith is pride. I hope that you will acknowledge the fact that you yourself are a little child.

I also believe in God. But from where did that faith by which I believe in God start? It started from the faith that simply believes in my heart that salvation by which He saved me from sin. My faith did not start from anywhere other than this faith that I have been saved.

The Lord has saved me. Now I believe in the Lord. I believe that the Lord who saved me will do this for me and do that for me and do everything for me. I ask, "Lord, please do this for me, and please do that for me as well." With what face could I pray like this? It is because I am like a little child that I pray. It is because it is believed in my heart that the Lord has saved us and that He loves us that I pray and make requests and receive the answer. The Lord said that the one who has that faith is the great one in the kingdom of heaven.

The Lord also spoke by the parable of the friend. It is the parable that says, *"Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves'" (Luke 11:5).* Though because it was midnight he would not rise and give to him, He said, *"Though he will not*

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rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs" (Luke 11:8). And He went on to say, *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11).* Faith starts from here.

Thanks to the Lord who has given us a faith like that of a little child

We must also remember this word which says, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 18:3). If we do not believe like little children the work that the Lord has done, there is by no means anyone who will enter the kingdom of heaven. Do you and I believe like little children that the Lord removed all our sins in order to save us?

That faith is a great faith. It is the faith that receives all the spiritual blessings of heaven, and the faith that can have the right of inheritance. It is by no means a small faith. That faith which says, like a little child, "Lord, You have taken away all my sins; Lord, I believe," is the faith that can have all the blessings of heaven. This faith is not an ordinary faith, but an exceedingly great faith.

There is no faith greater than this. The Lord has saved us from sin. He was baptized by John and had all our sins passed on to Him and took them upon Himself, and bearing those sins He was judged on the cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose from the dead and saved us from sin. There is no faith on this earth greater than the faith that believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is not a faith that is merely a

foundation.

Is there perhaps someone among you who, even while believing in his heart that the Lord has removed his sins, sets that faith aside and thinks of faith and of his relationship with God apart from it? Do not set it aside. I hope that you will keep that faith which believes in the salvation that the Lord has accomplished, and that you will make the start of faith with it as your foundation. Do not push it back on the ground that it is a matter already finished. It is because all blessings can be enjoyed and received from that faith by which we were saved. I hope that you will not treat this carelessly.

I also believe in God. From where does my believing in God start? It starts from the faith that believes that the Lord has removed all my sins. For this reason I believe all the works of the Lord, whatever great work or power it may be, whether a matter of the world to come or a matter of the present, however deep it may be. Because the Lord has saved me and I believe it, I believe all His other works as well. If the Lord had not saved me, I could not believe. On what ground would I believe? But because it is certain that the Lord has removed my sins and I believe it like a little child, I believe all the other works of God as well. It is for this reason that I call upon God by faith and live the life of faith by faith.

Do I really believe? Do I believe simply in my heart that the Lord has saved me? If I certainly believe, that faith is exceedingly great, and the person who believes that Jesus Christ has saved him has already had the life of faith started in him. That person is one who lives by faith.

I hope that you will not forget that faith which believes that God has saved us, that salvation by which He saved you and me, each one of us. I hope that you will live by that faith. Keep it. Do not count it lightly and throw it away and keep trying to

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have some other faith. I hope that you will believe the fact that the life of faith starts simply from that faith which is like that of a little child, and that you will give thanks that He has given us that faith which is like that of a little child, and will live by that faith. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

< Matthew 18:1-14 >

"At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost. What do you think? If a man has

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a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."

The faith that receives like a little child

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, *"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1).* Jesus answered and said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me" (Matthew 18:3–5).*

Who is the great one in the kingdom of heaven? It is a little child. It is the word that the one who humbles himself like a little child and receives purely is great in the kingdom of heaven, and that he is the one who enters the kingdom of heaven and the owner of the kingdom of heaven. It speaks of such a heart as receives the Word of God just as it is when hearing it, purely like a little child, because it is God who has spoken it. Such a person receives the remission of sin, receives blessings from God, has the kingdom of heaven become his own, and can also follow the Lord well. The one who is not so cannot follow Him well.

It is said that among the physiognomies of a man, the best countenance is the countenance of the heart. It means that if the

heart is good, everything is good, and that whatever the outward appearance may be, that is not important. It is so also when we look at our hearts before God. The one who laughs together and receives together with a heart that is truly unaltered, like that of a little child—such a person becomes the great one before God and one who receives blessings.

Yet when people hear the Word of God, they doubt and argue over whether this is really the Word of God or not. How can you know God fully? Is there anyone who has seen God? By what would you know that the words of the Bible are the Word of God? This Bible was written This Bible was written over a period of more than a thousand years, and from Genesis Chapter 1 onward the whole of it speaks about Jesus Christ.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1). The one who purely believes, saying, "God made it," is a great man in the kingdom of heaven. He is a man who is acknowledged by God and a man who believes in God. But the one who racks his brain, asking how anyone can know whether He did the creating in a single day or over billions of years, and who believes only what he himself understands and only what is right in his own thinking, cannot have faith.

The faith that believes the Word just as it is and the faith that destroys the Word

In this world there is a discipline called theology. There is a theology that believes the Word of God just as the Word is, and there is a theology that digs into the Word of God, doubts it, questions it, and believes only as much as the human head understands. Ever since the Bible was printed in type and translated into the languages of the whole world, disciplines

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that study God have arisen, and they are largely of two kinds. One side believes the Word of God recorded here just as it is, and the other side denies this Word and digs into it, saying that it is not so.

Those who purely believe the Word of God are saved and also obtain eternal life. But those who unconditionally say that it is not so do the work of destroying the Word even while saying that they believe in Jesus. Once they destroy the words of the Bible and make a flaw in them, from then on the faith of all those who believe in Jesus collapses. The collapsing of faith is a simple matter. If one believes that this Word is the Word of God, faith arises; and if one says that this Word is not the Word of God, faith is destroyed.

Some say that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, but that He is not God. They also say that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, but that not all of it is the Word of God. In this world those who destroy the Word in this way are far more numerous.

What is the characteristic of a little child? A little child is like a sheet of white paper. Of course he is born with sin, but because he has not yet learned anything, he receives whatever is put into him. Whether we believe or do not believe, God is alive, and He has spoken like this and has worked like this. A little child receives that purely. Even one who is advanced in the age of the flesh, if he purely believes the Word of God, believes just as it is whatever the Word says.

But there are many who do not believe in that way. And so there arise those who, even after believing in Jesus and becoming pastors or evangelists, make it their occupation. There arises the practice of diligently preaching in order to collect much offering, and of demanding a large honorarium, saying that since one has so many people under him he ought to be treated at least to this degree.

In Genesis God said, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1),* and He spoke, saying, "Let there be, let there be"; and after several thousand years had passed, in the New Testament the Bible speaks like this: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3).* It says that the One who spoke that Word is Jesus. The One who said in Genesis, "Let there be light," is Jesus, and as God who is the same as the Father, He was present together with Him when this universe and man were made. Therefore, if we receive the Word of God as the Word of God, our faith grows.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin"

He went on to speak like this: *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:6–7).*

The saying that one makes a person stumble means that he casts him down from a cliff. When one misses his footing on a precipice and slips and falls, we say that he has stumbled. Among those who believe in Jesus there are those who divide the Word, saying that some parts are the Word of God and some parts are not the Word of God. For a while there were even Bibles that marked in red letters only the words that Jesus spoke. But it is not only the words that Jesus spoke that are the

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Word of God; all the words recorded here are the Word of God. It is because they teach us and give us instruction.

A person who has only just come to have faith is unsteady and can be turned aside at once if anyone deceives him; there are those who make such a person stumble. It says that woe is upon the one who breaks down that person's faith by saying that Jesus is the Son of God but is not God, or who breaks it down by saying that not all of the Bible is the Word of God.

What kind of woe is it? It is the word that although he will also receive suffering and judgment for what he has done wrong on this earth, he will enter into the fire that is never quenched. There are cases in which, because one who has not been born again slanders one who has been born again and tells lies and drives him out as a heretic, a person whose faith is young cannot come out to the Church of God. The one who has done so suffers that woe himself. Therefore we have no need to stand against such people on purpose. We are not the judge.

The judgment of the world ends when one has served his sentence and come out, but there is no judgment more fearful than to suffer forever in the fire that is never quenched. Therefore those who do not believe go to hell, and those who make believers stumble also go to hell. If one says that Jesus is the Son of God but is not God, then Jesus is not the Savior either, but only one among many sages. For us, believing in Jesus is believing in God, not believing in a man. If we believe in a man, we can be disappointed at any time.

He went on to speak like this: *"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire" (Matthew 18:8).* It is the word that says not to go with one's own two feet to a place where, however long one attends the church, he is

always a sinner and where they cannot teach him how those sins are remitted, and not to serve there with one's two hands. If we were to cut off our hand and cut off our foot every time we do wrong, what body would be left? It is the word that says not to do so, and not to go there.

Do not despise the weak

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 18:10). It is that even one who is weak among those who have been born again must not be despised if he is one who believes. It is the word that says not to look down on him and treat him carelessly.

Why is it so? It is because God attaches an angel to each one who believes, and that angel always sees the face of God the Father before Him. Therefore, if a person says that he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, then even though his faith is younger than mine and he is lacking in the flesh, as long as he does not go the way that is cursed, I treat him courteously as one person to another and try in every way to lead him. When he goes the way that is cursed I rebuke him and make him turn back, but apart from that I do not despise him.

If we treat the people of God courteously as the people of God, God also treats us courteously. If we despise the people of God, that becomes despising God. If someone treats the child of a certain household carelessly, is that not despising his parents? Therefore we must have good manners.

It is so even when we joke among ourselves. Even if someone speaks with his words out of order or makes a

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mistake, we ought to count him one who gives us pleasure and listen with thankfulness. When we are working hard and someone says something absurd and we laugh together, how good that is! But if over such a thing we treat him carelessly, saying, “Do you not even know grammar? Can you not even pronounce it?” you also will be treated in that way. Above all, we must know that God the Father has attached an angel to that brother or sister.

It is so also when we talk with people. The one who first receives what the other person says and then also tells his own story has communication with him; but the one who, every time the other person speaks, analyzes whether this is right or not and decides whether or not to accept it, cannot have exchange with people either. Everyone at times wants to speak with exaggeration, wants to show himself off, and wants to hide what is shameful. So if we simply receive it, thinking, “He is a man after all,” communication goes well. It is good to let a person pour out what is in his heart.

The joy of finding the one lost sheep

Now let us look from verse 12. *“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:12–14).*

We must not lose people. A certain man is pasturing a hundred sheep on the mountain, and one of them goes off

somewhere else as it pleases and is lost. The owner goes out to seek that sheep, and when he finds it he rejoices. He said that he rejoices more over that one than over the ninety-nine. Of course this is not a word that makes light of the ninety-nine. This is a word spoken about souls, and it is the word that God counts one soul so precious.

If God counts them so precious, then a heart that counts them precious arises in us also. But even though we can bear with one person around us and wait for him and lead him, how could we do so for all that great multitude of people? We would like to bear with and wait for even those who have not been born again, but they do not wait for us. And so we do literature mission. We make books and deliver them within the country and also abroad.

When God looks upon them, among these many people there are those who have been lost to God. It means that there are people who want to believe in God and to live following the will of God and to receive the salvation that God has given, but who cannot receive salvation because no one guides them. God counts such people so very precious. Although we hand out books, we do not think that all of that great multitude are saved.

Among them there are those who have truly been lost. They are people who say, “Why was I born on this earth? For what do I live? Where did I come from and where am I going? There must surely be a purpose, but I do not know that purpose.” And so there are people who seek a god and seek God. One person goes to this religion and takes it for God, and another goes to that religion and wanders about.

A soul that has truly been lost can be saved by reading just one book. To a certain person it strikes home in his heart. One who does not seek God throws it away while reading it, but to

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one who says, "I really want to meet God," that one book becomes a compass. Just as one reaches his destination well when he has a guide while traveling, that book plays such a role. He comes to meet the Lord and to believe.

The Lord said, *"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7).* The one who truly seeks meets Him. There are also some who come to meet Him although they did not even seek. It is because those who went before preached to them and guided them.

We too were one lost sheep

I also am a soul that had been lost. Even after I had read the Bible once, although I understood other things, I suffered because of the question of why Jesus was baptized, and because, although it was said that He had removed sin eternally, there was sin in me. Later God taught me and I came to know. I came to know that Jesus was baptized by John and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him, and that just as He said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* He bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the cross and rose from the dead, and so saved us.

In my youth I also went through hardship, having sold all my fields and paddies and given the money away in order to believe in a certain religious body. While going through such difficulties I also earned money, but in the end I came to think that a man can do nothing more than eat and sleep and wear clothes. Then for what was I born, for what do I live, and where am I going? This was my great problem.

While I was troubled in this way, my body fell sick. When I

went to the hospital and had an X-ray taken, they said it was pulmonary tuberculosis. Since I had even coughed up blood, they said that I would die if I were not treated, and that since it was a disease that spreads to others, everyone I met and I myself would have to wear masks. I came to think, “Now it is over. I am not a person who wants to do harm to others, so I must put things in order. Before I go, I must put my sins in order.”

And so I sought Jesus. I prayed three times, saying, “I am going now; these and these are the sins I have committed, so please remove them.” While I was trying to put things in order in that way, instead of despair a new hope came surging up from within, and my whole body became warm. And so I prayed, saying, “If I live, then please make me a person who does no harm to others; I will preach this gospel to the whole earth.”

God heard my prayer and brought the sickness of my body to an end within three months. A thoracic surgeon at a large hospital looked at the X-ray films and said that for a person who had been like this to become like this was a thing that could not happen by any means. When he asked what I believed in and I said that I believed in God, he said that the One I believe in had helped me, and that it could by no means be like this otherwise. He said that since more than half of the lung had been damaged and the tissue inside it had all disappeared, it could not be that it was completely healed like this.

I was healed in that way, and since I had made a promise, I set out to preach the gospel to the world in order to keep that promise; and then I met the Word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and now I am preaching it to you. A certain sister in England also fell sick in body, and while she was in

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despair and troubled with the thought of whether she might die of this sickness and whether she could meet God, she came upon our book. She read that book, obtained hope, and had her sins remitted. She realized, “God loved me like this and has removed all my sins.” There are many such lost souls, people who need God.

Therefore do not think, “Why was I born like this? Why is my family like this?” You must know that God allowed such circumstances in order to meet you. Because we do not seek God unless we suffer and unless things are difficult, God allows a little difficulty to each one of us. Rather than living from childhood in wealth with nothing to envy and then going to hell, if one has had difficulties of many kinds and yet has met the Lord in the end, he becomes one who can know that this was the guidance of the Lord and can give thanks.

“Pride goes before destruction”

A man may seem clever, but he is not clever. There is no telling how often what he has decided with the conviction that it is certainly right turns out to be wrong. Yet the one who counts himself clever thinks his own decisions very wise. It is for this reason that he is deceived, and ruined, and even goes to hell.

Therefore we must listen to the Word of God, listen carefully also to the talk that the righteous share among themselves, and when we think that another person’s thought and faith are better than ours, quickly receive it and acknowledge that we were lacking. The one who acknowledges much receives much of the love of God. The one who acknowledges himself little also receives little love. The one

who acknowledges much receives the heart of the other person well and receives the Word of God well.

When I am working and consulting with the brothers, if the brothers say, "Would it not be good to do it this way?" I listen and consider. And then I say, "Your thought is far better; let us not do it the way I did, but as you have said." In some cases we also come to a compromise, saying, "Up to this point let us do it according to my thought, and for the rest let us do it that way." Since there are dangerous parts, we must consult together and do it.

If a man trusts his own thought and himself too much, he falls. It says, *"Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18).* We must not think too highly of ourselves. As we live, how many are the things that we counted right when we were young and that turn out to have been wrong! When I was young I too thought that a man becomes strong only by putting his body through rough treatment, and so I would sleep outdoors in the dew without even covering myself with a quilt. And then one day I collapsed.

People say that a man can become anything if he makes the effort, that where there is a will there is a way. But if it were so that anything can be done if we do it, why would people find it so hard to live? Even though everyone makes an effort, there are many things that do not come about. If all our efforts up to now have not been for serving the Lord, then what have we done when we look back on the days gone by? We have made an effort for these three things—clothing and sleeping and eating—and from now on also we shall only strive to maintain them and then depart.

The one who has raised up a great enterprise and the one who has made his name known also departed after striving to

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solve those three things. Do you think that a man is something great if he is clever? Do you think that he lives long if he has much money? It is nothing. I fell sick early and knelt before the Lord, and I said, "I will believe in You, so please remove my sins," and after that I prayed, "If You heal my sickness, I will preach the gospel to the whole world." And according to my promise I am now doing that work.

People often fail to keep their promises because they think only of what is to their own advantage. That is why man is lacking. God alone is truly faithful, and God alone is wise. Man is nothing. Therefore we receive blessings and become right people only when we rely on God and believe the Word of God. I believe that it is so. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The forgiveness and the union that the one whose debt was forgiven enjoys

< Matthew 18:15-35 >

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 'Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 'Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.' Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his

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wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 'But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 'So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'"

The admonition that gains a brother without condemning him

Jesus said that when a brother has sinned, we should first deal with that person alone and admonish him. He did not tell us to spread his fault among many people from the beginning or to put him to shame publicly. The purpose of admonition does not lie in exposing a fault and displaying one's own

superiority, but in gaining the brother.

He said that if he does not listen, we should take one or two others along, and that if he still does not listen, we should tell it to the church. This is the order that He established so that the admonition of the church may not be swayed by hasty personal judgment or by emotion. Before the church gives up one soul, it must exhort him again and again with the Word and wait for him to turn back from the wrong way. Love is not the overlooking of sin and falsehood, and the truth is not a weapon for crushing people either.

The matter that concerns the truth of the remission of sin in particular must be clear. If someone denies the gospel that Jesus removed all sins through the baptism that He received from John the Baptist and through the blood of the cross, and yet insists that he has been saved in his own way, the church cannot acknowledge that as it is. It is because the gospel that the church preaches is not a doctrine made by the assertions of men, but the truth of salvation that God has established in the Bible.

Yet even when we admonish, the purpose must be to gain the other person, not to cast him out. There must be compassion in our tone and attitude, and the truth of the gospel must be exact. We must distinguish between a small fault of a man and a falsehood that overturns salvation, and we must not confuse personal feelings with the will of God.

The Lord spoke carefully of the stages of admonition. To deal with him alone first is in order to protect the honor of the brother and to give him the opportunity to turn back of himself. If at this point we spread rumors without having verified the facts, or draw other people over to our own side, the admonition becomes not a work of love but a means of strife. Even if our heart has been hurt by the fault of a brother, we

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must first examine our own feelings before God, and meet him quietly with a heart that seeks to gain that soul.

Taking one or two more along is also not a matter of gathering forces in order to press the other person. It is the order that He established so that the facts and the standard of the Word may be made clear through two or three witnesses, and so that personal misunderstanding may not enter in. Those who go along must not be swept away by the feelings of either side, but must seek the will of God. If the brother receives the truth and turns back, we must not bring up his past fault over and over, but must help him so that he can have fellowship again.

Finally, telling it to the church is not a procedure for publicly putting him to shame, but the work of letting him receive the admonition of the community that God has established in order to keep one soul. The church must judge by the gospel and by the Word, but it must be long-suffering and wait. Even so, if he refuses the truth of the gospel and continues to despise the admonition of the church, the church cannot acknowledge that person's assertion as faith. This is not an act of casting him away in hatred, but a spiritual responsibility of not approving a wrong faith as right.

The faults in the life of a believer and the sin that goes against the truth of salvation must be dealt with separately. A believer, being weak in the flesh, can make mistakes and can wound others. Such problems must be admonished in love and forgiven, and we must help toward restoration. But a teaching that denies the perfect remission of sin that Jesus accomplished and sets up the deeds of men as a condition of salvation destroys souls, and so it must clearly be corrected. The strictness that keeps the truth and the compassion that embraces a weak brother must be present together.

The authority of the gospel entrusted to the church

Jesus said that whatever the church binds on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever it looses on earth will be loosed in heaven. This does not mean that the church can make or remove a person's sins at will. It means that God acknowledges the work by which the church preaches the gospel that God has appointed, testifies of the remission of sin to the one who believes that gospel, and makes clear to the one who does not believe that he is still under sin.

When a person believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the church confirms by the Word that he has received the remission of sin. On the contrary, if he refuses the fact that Jesus took sin upon Himself by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and refuses the judgment of the cross, then even though he says with his lips that he has no sin, his faith cannot be acknowledged as right. The standard of the authority to bind and to loose is not the personal feeling of a leader, but the Word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Lord said that if two agree together and ask, the Father will accomplish it, and that where two or three are gathered in the name of the Lord, He will be with them. The church is not made up of a building or of great numbers. When those who have received the remission of sin gather their hearts together within the will of the Lord and serve the gospel, the Lord works in their midst.

By himself a person easily falls into his own thoughts and easily becomes discouraged. But when he hears the Word within the church, exhorts others and is exhorted, and prays together with them, his heart is established again upon the gospel. To be united with the church is not to follow men blindly, but to join hearts in the gospel and in the work of

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saving souls that God has entrusted to the church. Through such union God seeks lost souls and enlarges His kingdom.

We must not understand the authority to bind and to loose as a power by which some individual may save or condemn people at will. The One who actually removed sin is Jesus. The church preaches the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid its price on the cross. The one who believes this Word is loosed from sin, and the one who refuses it remains bound to his own sin just as he was. What is acknowledged in heaven is not an emotional declaration of men, but faith in the gospel that God has appointed.

That two or three gather in the name of the Lord does not merely mean that they sit together in a place of worship. It is to believe together in the righteousness that the Lord accomplished and to gather their hearts for His will. When they pray with one accord for the preaching of the gospel and the salvation of souls, the Lord works in their midst. Even if it is small in scale and receives no attention in the world, if it is a church that keeps and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord is with it. On the contrary, even if many people gather, if they preach a different gospel, the number itself does not guarantee the presence of God.

The grace that removed the debt that could not be paid

Peter asked whether it would be enough to forgive up to seven times when a brother sins. Jesus told him to forgive even up to seventy times seven, and spoke the parable of the servant who owed ten thousand talents. Ten thousand talents was an

enormous debt that the servant could not pay even if he labored all his life. He said that he would pay it, but in fact he had no ability whatever to pay.

This debt is like the sin that we have committed before God. A man cannot pay for the sin of having broken the commandments of God with good deeds, or offerings, or fasting and prayers of repentance. Since the wages of sin is death, a sinless sacrificial offering must take the sin upon itself in his place and be judged. Because we cannot solve it however much we try, God Himself prepared the way of salvation.

Jesus had all the sins of us and of all mankind passed on to Him at once by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross, and so paid the whole price of sin, and He rose again from among the dead. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel of the perfect forgiveness of debt that God has bestowed on sinners who have no ability to pay.

To receive the remission of sin is not a matter of paying off a debt to God little by little. It is to have all our sins remitted once and for all by believing in the righteousness that Jesus accomplished. It is not that we reduce the amount of sin by offering many prayers of repentance, nor that we make up for past sins by good deeds. Just as the master had compassion on his servant and forgave him the whole debt, God gives the perfect remission of sin freely to the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The sum of ten thousand talents is not an amount that the servant could pay someday if he worked faithfully. It is a debt that could never be settled by his promises and his resolutions. Even so, the servant said at first that he would pay it all if he were given time. This is like the way a sinner tries to keep the commandments of God by his own deeds and to pay the wages

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of sin. A man resolves to live well from now on, but he sins again; and he tries to wash away his past sins with prayers of repentance, but new sins keep piling up on his conscience. Until he realizes his own inability, he cannot ask for the grace of the perfect forgiveness of his debt.

The reason why we cannot pay the debt of sin before God is that the price of sin is not merely a lack of good deeds. Sin is a transgression of the law of God, and its wages are death and judgment. It is not that sins already committed disappear because we do much service or give much offering. Either the sinner must die and receive the punishment, or a sinless ransom must have the sin passed on to it and die in his place. That is why the Son of God put on flesh and came to this earth.

Jesus had all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist. This was not a matter of declaring sin to be gone by word only, but an event in which He actually took sin upon Himself by the righteous method of God. After that He shed His blood and died on the cross and so paid the whole price of sin, and He rose from among the dead and gave eternal life to those who believe. Because God has fully received the payment for sin through the baptism and the death of His own Son, He can righteously forgive the debt of the sins of the one who believes.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the water is the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist, and the blood is the cross on which He was judged for the sin that He had taken upon Himself. The Holy Spirit bears witness that Jesus is God and that this salvation is the truth accomplished according to the will of God. When we believe these three testimonies, the conscience of a man is loosed from the debt of sin. It is not that sin disappears because our own deeds have become better, but that sin disappears because Jesus took away

all our sins and paid the whole price of them.

Therefore the remission of sin is not a shared burden in which only a part is paid for us and we pay the rest. Nor is it that the original sin is remitted by the cross while personal sins are remitted day by day through prayers of repentance. By the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist He took upon Himself all the sins of the world, including the original sin and personal sins, and on the cross He received the judgment of all those sins once and for all. The one who believes this fact has all the sins of the past and the present and the future remitted. This is the grace that forgave the whole debt.

The one who believes in the perfect forgiveness of his debt does not take sin lightly. When he commits a fault he honestly acknowledges it before God and turns from it, and he thinks of the baptism and the suffering of the cross that the Lord underwent because of that sin. But he does not put forth his own tears and resolutions as a new price of atonement. He believes and gives thanks for the righteousness of the Lord that has already been paid, and he asks for the help of the Holy Spirit and turns from the same fault. The assurance of the remission of sin and a holy life do not stand opposed to each other. The more one believes in the perfect grace, the more there arises in him a heart that loves the Lord and desires to live according to His will.

The forgiveness that the one whose debt was forgiven bestows

The servant whose great debt had been forgiven went out and took by the throat a fellow servant who owed him a hundred denarii. Forgetting the compassion that had been

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shown to him, he demanded that the small debt be paid to the last. When the master saw this, he rebuked him as a wicked servant. It is because he did not receive by faith the grace by which the king had forgiven him the whole debt and did not abide in that grace, but rather, by demanding that his fellow servant pay the debt again, became one who went against the perfect forgiveness that the king had bestowed.

Compared with the remission of sin that we have received from God, the wrongs that other people have done to us are like a hundred denarii. Of course this does not mean that the wounds we receive from people are small. There are also pains that are hard to forgive. But when we remember what kind of sinners we were before God and how great a compassion we received, we cannot hold the other person forever as a sinner.

To forgive from the heart is not to pretend that the wrong never happened or to acknowledge unrighteousness as right. It is to make clear the necessary admonition and responsibility, and yet to release the other person from a heart that hates and condemns him. It is to hope that he will turn back and be restored within the gospel, and to bestow on him also the compassion that we ourselves have received.

Moreover, we must not shut people up in the prison of sin by telling them that they are still sinners even though they believe in Jesus. Just as the wicked servant demanded that his fellow servant pay the debt, so to teach people to pay the debt of sin with prayers of repentance and good deeds, even though God has perfectly forgiven all their sins, is a wicked work that goes against the grace of God. Jesus had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him by the baptism that He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He was judged on the cross and shed His blood and died, and He rose again on the third day. The church must not be a place that puts

the yoke of "sinner" upon people by looking at their deeds, but a place that looses souls by preaching the gospel of the perfect remission of sin.

That the master was angry and delivered the wicked servant to the torturers until he should pay all the debt does not mean that if a righteous person who has received the remission of sin fails once to forgive his brother, the salvation he has already received is canceled. God has perfectly forgiven all the sins of the world. Yet upon the one who nevertheless demands that another person pay the debt of sin again, and who thus goes against the grace of God, judgment comes. Even a righteous person who has received the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit can find it hard to forgive his brother because of the weakness of the flesh. But he remembers the fact that he himself had a debt of ten thousand talents forgiven freely, and so he turns from hatred and condemnation, has compassion on his brother, and preaches to him also the gospel of the perfect forgiveness of debt, that the Lord has removed all sins.

The one who has engraved on his heart the grace of having had ten thousand talents forgiven has compassion on other people. He does not put his own righteousness first, but is long-suffering toward the weakness of his brother, and he desires that even the one who has done wrong may stand again within the gospel. Forgiveness is not a virtue that comes out of a man's broad heart, but a fruit that flows out of the remission of sin that he first received from the Lord.

The word that tells us to forgive even up to seventy times seven does not mean that we may exactly count the number of the wrongs and then no longer forgive once the fixed number has been passed. Just as the Lord did not count our sins and remit only a part of them, it means that we are to keep

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bestowing compassion within the grace we have received. By a man's resolution alone it is hard to bear with repeated wrongs. But when we remember the fact that we ourselves have had a debt of ten thousand talents forgiven, we can look upon our brother's hundred denarii with different eyes.

Forgiveness is different from the neglect that leaves an unrighteous work to go on. In matters that harm other people, such as violence and fraud, proper responsibility and measures of protection are necessary. The church also must not hide sin or force the one who has been harmed to endure unconditionally. To forgive from the heart is not to turn away from the truth, but to entrust hatred and the desire for revenge to God and to hope, within the necessary order, that the person will turn back. Compassion does not do away with justice, but makes justice be carried out with restoration as its goal.

In a heart that cannot forgive a brother's fault, one's own righteousness is often hidden. Thinking that he himself has not committed such a fault, he lowers the other person and condemns him. But when he sees how great a sinner he himself was before God, the ground for standing above another person disappears. Believers have different weaknesses from one another in the flesh. It is only that another person's weakness is easily seen while one's own weakness is not seen well. The one who remembers the compassion he received from the Lord looks back upon himself even when he admonishes, and speaks with meekness.

Forgiveness within the church is also connected with the preaching of the gospel. If we take hold of one another's small faults and quarrel, our hearts are divided and we cannot carry out the work of saving souls together. On the contrary, if we bear with one another within the gospel and receive admonition, the church can be united and serve more souls.

Forgiveness is not merely a matter of making one's own heart comfortable; it is an act of faith that opens the way so that we may not hinder the work that God will accomplish through the church.

The church that knows the fact that the Lord has forgiven the debt of all the sins of the world cannot keep this news to itself alone. It must preach the gospel of the perfect forgiveness of debt to those who are still fasting and weeping and bound to repeated prayers of repentance in order to pay the debt of their sins. They also can be loosed from all their sins if they believe in the baptism that Jesus received from John the Baptist and in the blood of the cross. To preach the gospel is the work of making the sins that God has already removed be gone by faith in the hearts of men as well.

The Lord called us who were sinners into the church and made us hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and He forgave us the whole debt of sin that we could not pay. Now we must share this grace together and be united within the gospel. We must admonish in order to gain our brother, pray together with one accord, and forgive from the heart. When we do so, the church is used not as a prison that condemns people, but as the kingdom of God that looses sinners and makes lost souls live.

The latter part of Matthew Chapter 18 teaches that both the order of the church and forgiveness must come out of the gospel. Admonition without the gospel easily becomes condemnation, and forgiveness without the truth ends in leaving wrong unattended. But when the church places at its center the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has forgiven the debt of ten thousand talents of sin, it firmly keeps the truth and yet has pity on people. The purpose of admonishing a brother also lies in gaining him, the authority to

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bind and to loose also lies in making souls live by the gospel, and forgiveness also lies in sharing the grace of the forgiveness of debt that we first received. Therefore the church must not be a place that demands that people pay the debt of sin again, but a place that preaches the gospel that Jesus took upon Himself all sins by the baptism He received from John and accomplished a perfect forgiveness of debt by the cross and the resurrection.

We were servants who had no ability to pay our own sins, but God removed the whole debt through His only begotten Son. Therefore we must not take hold of another person's fault and condemn him forever as a sinner. We must correct by the Word what is to be corrected, and yet forgive from the heart and help him to stand together with us within the gospel. The Lord is present in such a union of believers, and He hears their prayers and calls out by the gospel of the perfect forgiveness of debt those who are still pressed down by the debt of sin. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

God, who forgave the debt of ten thousand talents

< Matthew 18:21-35 >

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 'But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I

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forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 'So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'"

Forgive your brother by the grace of salvation

Let us give thanks to the Lord who has saved us, and let us preach the Lord. Our Lord speaks this gospel to us in the midst of our living. In the last verse of today's passage He said, *"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matthew 18:35).*

This word began from the question of Peter. *"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" (Matthew 18:21–22)* Seven times, or seventy times seven, is not a word telling us to fill up four hundred and ninety times. It is a word telling us to forgive endlessly, without limit.

What Peter asked about was a brother. He asked how much one must forgive when a person who believes in God has done wrong to him. It is the word that we must forgive endlessly, that we must forgive it all. And in saying this the Lord explains this gospel. The Lord, while speaking of the matters of daily living, always enters into the gospel and resolves that living by the gospel.

The powerless servant who owed a debt of ten thousand talents

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:23–27).

He said that the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. The gospel is exactly this story. It is that this is how God has removed the sins of us men. Just as He said to forgive even up to seventy times seven, God has removed all our sins. There is no one at all who cannot receive the remission of sin before God.

Then what kind of person fails to receive the remission of sin and is cast away before God? He is explaining that by this parable of the debt. One who owed ten thousand talents was brought before the king, and he had nothing with which to pay. How much would ten thousand talents be? It speaks of a lump of gold as big as a house. It speaks of an amount without limit. It is an amount that even the greatest rich man in the world could not pay, even if he sold a whole country.

It was said that if he had no ability to pay, he and his wife and his children and all that he had should be sold and payment be made. But it is a debt that cannot be paid even if all that were sold. It is a debt that is not covered even if he sells all his property, and not covered even if he gives up his own life, and,

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even that not being enough, he must give up the life of his wife and the life of his children as well, and yet it still falls short. And so this servant fell down and bowed and begged, saying, “Have patience with me; I will pay you all.”

Yet the master of that servant had compassion on him and released him and forgave him the debt. It is the word that God has forgiven the debt of all the sins of all men, all that they have done wrong before God. It is that He has removed it all.

The one who received an unlimited forgiveness of debt before the king

Can a man solve by himself what he has done wrong before God? However much we think about it, there is no way to solve it. How would we repent of it? A man is always committing wrong before God. Therefore the only way for that to be solved is the way in which the king forgives the debt of the one who is in debt. There is no other way to solve the problem of that debt.

The king had compassion on the one who was in debt and forgave him. He wiped it all out one-sidedly. If, though the man had no ability to pay, he were still told to pay, then since he would have no ability to pay until he grew old and died, and even after death forever, he could not but live as an eternal sinner, an eternal debtor. Because that was pitiful, the king said, “I must pay it for him; I must forgive the debt; I must loose him from this snare of debt.” The king loosed him.

Therefore this debtor was set free. The one who has become righteous before God is the one who has had the whole debt of sin forgiven. God has removed all our sins by a perfect salvation and an unlimited forgiveness of debt. Because the

Lord has removed our sins, we have become people without sin.

God has removed all the sins even of those who do not yet know this gospel, of those who think that they can by no means receive the remission of sin, and of those who are committing countless sins; yet those who have not heard this news do not receive the forgiveness of their debt. Therefore we must preach this news. The king forgave the whole debt of the one who owed ten thousand talents. That servant paid not a single penny.

To pay ten thousand talents, it is not enough to pay a little. If one is to pay, he must pay it all; and if he cannot pay, he is a debtor forever. However hard he tries, he has no ability to pay. It says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).* Since the wages of sin is death, there is no one who can put forth his own life and pay that wages of sin in full.

The way to receive the remission of sin is not something that comes about by dying, nor is it something that comes about by martyrdom. One must receive the forgiveness of his debt before the king. Only when God removes our sins can we receive the forgiveness of our debt. People speak of those who were martyred, but one does not receive the forgiveness of his debt because he was martyred, nor is he saved by it. It is when the king forgives the debt that one is saved and set free; the debt does not disappear because the debtor died for his master.

It may be so by the logic of men, but before God it is by no means so. God had compassion on our life and removed our sins. And so we have been saved and have received the forgiveness of our debt.

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How did God forgive our debt?

That He forgave the debt, that the king one-sidedly removed the debt of the one who owed ten thousand talents—this is the gospel. If one has received the forgiveness of his debt, does he have a debt or not? He does not. The king removed it, tore up the document, and paid the price in his place. Then how did God forgive our debt?

He sent Jesus Christ, He sent His own Son, and by passing our sins on to the head of that Son He forgave our debt. John the Baptist gave Jesus baptism in the Jordan River and thereby passed the sin of the world on to Him, and Jesus was baptized by John and had all our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross in our place, and by rising from the dead He paid all our debt. That is why John the Baptist testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).* This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that forgave our debt.

To say that one has received the forgiveness of his debt is to say that he has been made sinless. It is to say that his debt has been remitted. What is it that we owe before God? Sin is exactly the debt. The sins that we commit throughout our whole life are the ten thousand talents. Do we have the ability to pay that? Do we have the ability to remove sin by repenting? Do we have the ability to reduce sin by performing penance?

Even if a man commits only the tiniest speck of sin, he must pay with his life; so what sacrifice could he make and what good deed could he do that would make that sin disappear? There is no reason for it to disappear. It is because the wages of sin are too heavy. It can be done only if the king one-sidedly forgives the wages of our sin. Is that not how we too were saved?

God is the truth. He is truly a wondrous One and the God of grace. God has removed all our sins. He has bestowed grace on us and has set us free from sin. Who has saved us from sin? Jesus Christ is exactly God, the One who made us, and our Master. God has removed our sins, has saved us from sin, and has set us free from the snare of debt.

We are ones who cannot pay the debt of sin

That servant said, "Have patience with me; I will pay you all." We too, not knowing well, would say, "Have patience with me; I will pay; I will not cheat you of it." But when the king looked at him, he said that he would pay but had no ability to pay, and so the king forgave him everything. If he had had the ability to pay and there had been something to expect from him, the king would not have forgiven him.

In the work by which God removes our sins, not the least bit of human strength or ability or merit can be added. Would all our sins disappear because we repent? Could we repent of every one of our wrongs without leaving out any? They say that one receives the remission of sin by prayers of repentance, but by prayers of repentance one cannot have all his sins remitted. Therefore God has removed all our sins once and for all in Jesus.

Even though a man's heart is upright and he repents and turns and tries to live rightly and tries to attain sanctification, when God looks at him, because we are people who cannot live in that way, He one-sidedly forgave the whole debt of our sins. We are people who cannot do even the least thing before God in order to remove those sins. We are people who cannot do even the least thing that would add to or help in the removing

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of sin.

It is God who has removed all our sins. A hundred out of a hundred, it is wholly God who has removed them. It is not that we received the remission of sin because we repented. It is not that we received the remission of sin because we did something before God. God has removed all our sins.

This servant who owed ten thousand talents also said that he would pay, but there is no word that he paid even a penny. The king one-sidedly forgave him everything. It was not that he forgave nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine talents and made him pay one talent; he forgave the entire ten thousand talents without leaving a single one.

Is it that after we believe in Jesus our sins disappear only when we at least repent and at least pray and at least reflect on ourselves? No. It is not that our sins disappear because we reflect on the sins we have committed and feel remorse and offer prayers of repentance. Not even one talent disappears. If it did disappear, then it would mean that the one who offers many prayers of repentance and reflects much has many sins removed, and the conclusion would follow that if one disciplines himself all his life they would all disappear.

If one reflects and reflects again and weeps and offers prayers of repentance again and does so until he dies, removing five talents today and ten talents tomorrow, what hope would there be? But a man's reflecting, or feeling remorse for his wrongs, or offering prayers of repentance, or living rightly—not one of these removes even one talent of sin. It is the same with our good deeds. In the receiving of the remission of sin there is not the least thing that we can do.

The wicked servant who laid hands on the one who owed a hundred denarii and took him by the throat

Yet this man goes out and does a strange thing. He behaves as though he had not received the forgiveness of his debt, as though he had received it by some effort of his own. This is a false prophet. *"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him" (Matthew 18:28–34).*

The man who had ten thousand talents forgiven went out and took hold of one who owed him a hundred denarii. Compared with ten thousand talents, a hundred denarii is not an amount worth comparing at all. He grabbed by the throat the one who had done him a little wrong and told him to pay the debt, and threw him into prison. His fellow servants saw it and were very grieved. He himself had had the whole ten thousand talents forgiven, and yet he could not forgive the one who owed him a hundred denarii, but grabbed him by the throat and threw him into prison.

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That is why He called him a wicked servant. If we do not rightly realize the grace of God, this is what happens. We ought to believe the work that God has done and abide in it; but if we go against the work that God has done and do not abide in the faith that believes the grace of God, we become a wicked servant and a false prophet. He himself has had ten thousand talents forgiven and has received the remission of sin, and yet he goes out and teaches people to repent of their sins and to receive remission by offering prayers of repentance.

He said, *"You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me" (Matthew 18:32).* The worker who makes the great favor of God of no effect remains before God as the most wicked servant in this world and in the world to come, and he receives judgment. It is because he makes null and void that remission of sin by which God has removed all the sins of all the people of the whole world.

God has removed all the sins of any sinner in this world, whatever sins he may have committed. There is not one person whose sins God has not removed. Strictly speaking, God has removed even the sins of the man who is pointed at as the most wicked in this world, and even the sins of the man who founded a heresy. He has removed all the sins that those people commit, without leaving a single one.

If only he turns back—if only he turns back from despising that grace of God and believes, if only he knows it and receives it—he obtains the favor of God, receives the remission of sin, and goes to the kingdom of heaven. The reason he does not receive the remission of sin is, first, that he himself does not believe that God has forgiven the whole debt; and second, that he wrongly teaches people to pay the debt of a hundred denarii, to receive the remission of sin by offering prayers of repentance. It is because he does the work of destroying the

favor of God that he is judged as a wicked servant.

Who is such a person? The Lord says that there are many such. It is that there are many false servants. Even though all their own sins have been remitted, they tell other people to pay their debt. They ought to go and testify that the Lord has forgiven the whole debt, but instead they tell them to pay the debt of a hundred denarii with prayers of repentance. Among pastors there are many such people. They seem wise to themselves, but they are going down under judgment.

Repentance and self-sanctification can never take the place of the forgiveness of debt

God has removed all our sins. Then who is there in this world who has sin? Who is there whose sin remains because God has not forgiven his debt, and who therefore goes to hell? God has forgiven every debt and has saved everyone. It is by not believing what God has forgiven that people go to hell. It is by not believing that they become sinners, and it is by not believing and only offering many prayers of repentance that they go to hell.

That is why Jesus told Peter to forgive not only seven times but even up to seventy times seven. It is the word that says, "Even though your sins were ten thousand talents, I have forgiven you the whole debt; therefore you also must forgive the whole debt of the wrongs that your brother does to you." In the Lord's Prayer also it says, *"And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).*

If we cannot forgive, we are ones who do not believe that the Lord has forgiven the whole debt of our sins. Those who believe in God bear with others and forgive. The one who has

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had his whole debt forgiven also forgives. When we rebuke someone, we speak not because we hate him, but because we hope that he will turn back.

People go into the mountains and offer forty days of fasting prayer and repent, and they say that the sins they committed long ago came up like the film of a movie, and that as they wept and offered prayers of repentance the forty days passed without their knowing when they had gone by. And a certain famous church father wrote a book of confessions, and it is said that he repented beginning from having bitten his mother's breast when he was a child. Of course that also was a wrong thing. But did our Lord forgive even that debt, or did He not? He forgave it all. Did that man attain sanctification because he repented of it?

That is exactly the same thing as taking by the throat the one who owed a hundred denarii and telling him to pay it. Then does that person commit no sin after that? Does he repent of all the sins he commits day by day? How could he confess them all? Even to confess only the sins committed in dreams at night, a month would not be enough. If one dreams a single bad dream, even a whole year of prayers of repentance would not finish it; so how could he possibly deal with even the sins committed in childhood?

That church father was originally one who had believed in a pagan religion and then turned to Christianity. As he was barely entering in, he acknowledged before God that he had done such wrongs, and turned. It is like the people of Israel who, while serving idols, came out to the baptism of repentance as a token of turning back when John the Baptist cried out, *"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Matthew 3:7).*

The baptism that John the Baptist gave was of two kinds.

One is the baptism of repentance that turns people back toward God, and the other is the baptism by which the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus Christ. The former is only an entering in and a turning back. Yet those who set up the righteousness of man higher than the righteousness of God make that turning back into a great thing, record it in biographies of great men, elevate the man as a saint, and make it a ground for the theory of sanctification. It is God who has removed our sins; it is not that sins disappeared because one offered prayers of repentance for the sins he had committed from childhood.

However much one repents, what will he do about the sins he will commit hereafter? And they are ten thousand talents. Do sins disappear when one confesses them? One receives the remission of sin by confessing and by believing that the Lord has removed his sins; however much he confesses, sins do not disappear. If sins disappeared by confessing, it would become exactly the same as the receiving of the remission of sin in other religions by walking around a pagoda and bowing until one's back breaks. That is religion, not faith. It is a despising of the work that God has done.

Let the one who has truly received the forgiveness of debt speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Only the one who has received the remission of sin can forgive his brother. The one who has not had all his sins forgiven before God finds it hard to forgive his brother. Since God has removed all our sins, we must not become wicked ones before God. To those who are committing sins we must rightly preach the fact that God has removed even those sins.

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We must not do the wicked work of teaching them to receive the remission of sin by prayers of repentance.

What He calls wicked here is not spoken concerning the faults of our conduct. God calls a man wicked when, concerning the sins of other people, he teaches them to receive the remission of sin by prayers of repentance, and thus despises the work that God has done and seeks not the glory of God but his own glory. Therefore we must not do such a wicked work.

Even after receiving the remission of sin and becoming a servant of God, to cry out before people only that they must repent is a wicked work. Instead of telling them to repent, we must tell them that God has removed all our sins. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we preach this Word on the spot, then the one who truly desires to receive the remission of sin hears this gospel and receives the remission of sin on the spot.

It says, *"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him" (Matthew 18:34).* To be shut up in prison and to be delivered to the torturers are different. The one shut up in prison has a certain freedom of his own even within his confinement, but the one delivered to the torturers cannot move at all. That he was delivered to the torturers means that he was delivered to sin, and that he became a person who can never again get out of sin.

God has removed all our sins. Yet everyone who says that God could not remove all sins, that the original sin has been remitted while personal sins are remitted by repenting, and that one attains sanctification by repenting also of the sins he will commit hereafter—all such people are delivered to the torturers. Once one is delivered to the torturers, it is the end. Even though he believes, he becomes an eternal sinner.

There are far too many people on this earth who make of no effect the sins that God has removed. It is exactly as He said, *"A man's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:36)*. Those who do not believe in God rather do not do such a wicked work. They know God as the God of love and try in their own way to receive Him, and they ask Him to wash their sins again. Yet those who say that they know the love of God, those who say that they have received the remission of sin, go out and do such a thing. What is it that they seek? Is it not their own profit that they seek?

We must lift high the banner of this gospel of the water and the Spirit. God has removed our sins. God has removed the sins of all the people of the whole world. We are not sinners. Just as He said, *"Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you" (Isaiah 60:1)*, we must arise and shine.

So let us not be discouraged as we preach the gospel. If you meet a leader who teaches that one receives the remission of sin by repenting, open the Bible and show him this Word of Matthew 18:28 and following, just as it is. Ask him how he views this Word. If even then he does not receive it, do not take hold of him and wrestle with him any longer. The Lord also said, *"Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine" (Matthew 7:6).*

Rather than quarreling long with a person who says with his mouth that he is righteous while his heart is that of a sinner, we must go to seek the lost souls. Let us take courage. God has removed all our sins, and so we have been saved. I give praise to God. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord has forgiven the debt of all the sins of the world

< Matthew 18:23-35 >

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. 'But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that

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was due to him. 'So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.'"

The Lord told us to forgive

Today we have read this Word. We know that to forgive those who do wrong to us is the right thing, and we believe so as well. We believe that we must forgive all who do wrong to us. But even though we understand it when we learn it, when it becomes a matter that actually strikes us, it is truly hard and difficult. I know that everyone has such experiences.

Even so, our Lord told us to forgive. "*Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Matthew 18:21–22).* It is the word that we are to forgive without limit. Even though it is hard, we cannot but do according to this Word. There is always in us the longing for the day when this flesh will put on a perfect body and meet the Lord, and when we shall live in a perfect world. We live day by day looking forward to such a day.

God, who forgave the debt of the sin of the world

Let us look at the Word that we read today. "*Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded*

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that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:23–27). When a certain king settled accounts with his servants, he forgave the whole debt of the one who owed ten thousand talents. It says that the kingdom of heaven is like this.

Why is it so? It is because God has in this way forgiven the whole debt of the sins of you and me, and of all the people of the whole world. From God's side He said, "Since you can by no means pay, I will pay it for you; I will make it as though it did not exist," and He removed it. And so, by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have received the forgiveness of our debt and have been saved.

This Word is exceedingly simple. But anyone who has been in debt will understand it very deeply. The one who has been in debt is always straitened in heart because of that debt, and he always has the longing, "When shall I get out of this debt? Even if I eat but three meals a day, shall I be able to live uprightly as a person without debt?" He will know how happy the man is whose longing has been fulfilled. Here this debt speaks of sin, and this master speaks of God.

Anyone who has suffered because of the sin in his heart will know how thankful a thing it is to have had the debt of sin forgiven. If we have even one small sin, how hard it is! There is no telling how hard it is, because we are pressed down by that sin and condemned and attacked, and because we think of the punishment for that sin. Therefore you and I who have received the remission of sin are exceedingly happy people. Whenever things are hard and difficult, I think of the fact that the Lord has removed all my sins. When I think of that,

strength arises in my heart.

We have had all the wages of sin forgiven

How could we pay in full the debt that we owe to that master? How could we make full compensation for sin? A servant owed his master ten thousand talents and could not pay, and so it was said that he and his wife and his children and all that he had should be sold and payment be made. Then that servant fell down and bowed and begged, saying, "Have patience with me; I will pay you all." When the master looked at him, since he had no ability to pay, he one-sidedly forgave him the whole debt.

With what could we make full compensation for the sin by which we have broken the law of God? Even if one tried to make compensation with his own single body all his life, he could not accomplish it. Even if not only he himself but his wife and his children and his grandchildren and his daughters-in-law and his whole family joined their strength together and did good deeds, how could they make full compensation for the sin that one man has committed by transgressing the law of God? It can by no means be compensated for.

It says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).* The wages of sin demand death. Only by dying is that price paid; then with what would each one of us make compensation for the sin of having broken even one small thing of the law? How could we escape from the punishment and the suffering and the curse for that sin? We can by no means escape.

Of course the law is what makes us realize and know sin. It says, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be*

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justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). But the law is without question the commandment of God. It is not a law that changes from moment to moment like the laws of the world, but the law of the Absolute One and the commandment of the Absolute One. Even though we live disregarding that commandment, we must without fail remember it.

Why is it so? It is because, when at the last He passes judgment on sin, He will judge us by asking, according to that law of God, whether we have transgressed or have not transgressed. Therefore we must not forget the six hundred and thirteen laws and commandments that God has given; the one who does not know them must learn them through the Word of the Bible, and the one who has learned them must remember them, and the one who remembers them must know and believe what a great blessing and favor of God and true happiness it is to have received the remission of all those sins, to have received the forgiveness of that debt, and to have been saved from sin.

The blessing of the one who has received the remission of sin

Having nothing with which to pay before his master, he and his wife and his children and his whole family had to live as slaves, and though they served as slaves forever they could not get out of it; and then the master forgave them all of it and set them free from slavery. Since what He did in saving you and me is like that, how thankful a thing it is! If we have even a little sin, we must go to hell and receive punishment; and if we have sin, there is no peace.

If there is no peace even when we have sinned against men, how much less could there be peace if we have sin before God? If a man is in his right mind, how could he eat well and laugh and live? Since he goes to hell as soon as time passes, how could there be peace? It is for this reason that the world is dark, that this world is going toward its end, and that everything is losing its strength.

But even while living in such a world, to have no sin before God, to have received the remission of sin, to have had forgiven before God the sins we commit in our hearts and the being made sinners that we inherited through our forefathers and all the sins we commit in our lack while living in this world—this is truly a great blessing. David spoke like this about the happiness of a man: *"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin" (Romans 4:7–8).*

It says that the one whose lawless deeds have been remitted and whose sins are covered, the one who has been saved from sin so that he does not receive all the judgment for sin, is blessed. It says that he is a happy man. Although we are living in this dark and difficult world, we must become people who know how to give thanks to God for this one thing, that you and I have had our sins forgiven before God.

How long will a man live? The coming of the end on a cosmic scale is the work of God who is above, but each of us personally will stand before God. Then how thankful a thing it is to have received the remission of sin before God! Even before men, when a debt is forgiven we are as glad as though we could fly; so how thankful a thing it would be to hear before the Judge who will judge all sins the words, "I have forgiven you the whole debt of all your sins"!

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If we merely say "salvation," it sounds like nothing at all. But think of having been in a debt that could not be paid, like this servant here, and then having had it forgiven. We had to go to hell and to receive punishment forever, and we have been exempted from all that suffering. How blessed a thing this is! God has forgiven all the sins that we have committed in our lack, and even all the sins that we shall commit in our lack as we go on living. For this one thing alone we must always live with thanksgiving.

If a person does not know how to give thanks for this, he is in fact not a person who has been saved. He is a person who does not know that he has received the forgiveness of the debt of sin. Those who have no such joy and gladness in their hearts and who do not know that they have obtained the grace of the forgiveness of the debt of sin in their relationship with God—I hope that you will hear the Word more and have personal fellowship as well, and receive by the Word of God the forgiveness of all your sins.

Forgive from the heart the faults and wrongs of your brothers and sisters

Now look at today's passage from verse 28. "*But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt" (Matthew 18:28–30).* The man who had had ten thousand talents forgiven, even though the one who owed him a hundred

denarii said that he would pay, could not bear with him but seized him by the collar and threw him into prison.

The fellow servants who saw it were very grieved and went and told their master. Then it says, *"Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him" (Matthew 18:32–34).* The one who owed a hundred denarii could at least work it off with his body, but ten thousand talents cannot be paid even if one comes outside and pays all his life; and so if he tries to work it off with his body, it is an eternal prison.

First of all, we must forgive from the heart all the faults and wrongs among the brothers and sisters who have been saved. Just as God has forgiven the whole debt of our sins, we too must forgive one another. But what the Lord speaks of here is not that alone.

God has forgiven the debt of the sins of all the people on this earth. Since on man's side the wages of the sin of having transgressed the law of God cannot be paid in full, on God's side He has removed all the sins of all men by the water and the Spirit. Yet some people cannot bear with those people, but rather seize them and shut them up in prison. Even though God has removed all sins, people among themselves shut one another up in a prison without iron bars, saying, "You have sin; you are a sinner."

They say, "You are going to hell; you must repent; you must pay that debt in full." Even though God has removed the sins of men, men make men into sinners and shut them up in prison. Such people exist on this earth. Countless religious people look at a man's character and look at his conduct, and

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even if he has some small fault they tell him that he is a sinner. When he comes out of prison they again tell him to pay his debt, and they again bring up his sin and shut him up in prison again. It is because such people exist that the Lord speaks this parable.

They tell people to come out to church and to believe in Jesus, and after saying that it is good to believe in Jesus, they next point out their conduct and point out their faults, and in conclusion they say, “You are sinners; even though you believe in Jesus you are sinners.” In that way they bind people tightly and keep them shut up just as they are in a prison without bars and make them suffer. And they tell them that in order to solve those sins they must offer many prayers of repentance, practice much asceticism, and do many good deeds.

But even if one does many good deeds and offers many prayers of repentance and endures much hardship, can he pay for the sin that he has committed before God? Can he come out of that prison? When will the day come when he can say, “I am not a sinner; all my sins have disappeared”? There are those who keep people shut up in prison so that such a day may never come. God hates such people.

Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit forgives the debt of sin

A man has not kept the law of God; then, however good a life he lives, if he has not been born again of water and the Spirit but merely believes in Jesus unconditionally and does many good deeds and offers many prayers of repentance and gives much offering and tithes faithfully and attends dawn prayer faithfully, will the sin of having transgressed the law of

God disappear from his heart? Such a day will never come. The Lord said, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5).*

In order to receive before God the remission of sin and the perfect forgiveness of the debt of the heart, one must know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He must know how the master forgave the whole debt of the one who owed ten thousand talents, and he must hear that Word of the forgiveness of debt. When we believe the Word of God, true peace comes upon our hearts. However hard one strives and however many good deeds he does, by the deeds of man he cannot get out of the prison of sin.

Yet there are many people who, not having gotten out themselves, keep others also from getting out, shutting them up in prison while merely telling them to believe in Jesus. These are called servants of Satan. It says, *"For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).* A servant of the law looks holy like an angel of light, but the law in the end only teaches sin; it cannot forgive the debt of a man's sin.

What forgives the debt of a man's sin is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that our Lord accomplished by coming to this earth. It is that gospel of salvation in which Jesus was baptized by John and had all the sins of the world passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the cross in our place, and by rising from the dead He paid all our debt. Those who say of people who believe in Jesus that they are sinners who still have sin are messengers of the law and servants of the devil.

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The one who is shut up in sin is still a debtor

Is the very person who speaks so upright before God? However upright he may be now, the sins he has committed up to now are more than enough to send him to hell. It is because if one commits even the tiniest speck of sin, he must without fail lay down his own life. Then is he saying that he has not committed even the tiniest speck of sin? Is he saying that he has not transgressed even one of the laws of God? Before the holy God, even the least sin demands the death penalty.

Today there is so much of Christianity in the whole world; but however holily one offers worship, and though the sound of the pipe organ fills the place, and the choir numbers several hundred, and the chapel is large, and the order of worship is proper, can one receive the remission of sin by that? It is not by offering worship holily that one receives the remission of sin. If one offers worship holily, only sin is revealed. He only comes to think, “That person looks so holy, but I do not qualify.” Even if one offers worship filled with emotion, only sin is revealed.

At one time tens of thousands of people gathered in a great open square and sang solemnly for hours and offered prayers of repentance all together and performed rhythmic movements and held a great meeting. But what remained? Since they did not hear the Word of God but held a rally among themselves, what would remain within their hearts? Only sin remained. They were shut up in sin. That is to say, they were shut up in prison. Even among those who outwardly walk about looking perfectly fine, there are those who are shut up in prison and those who are not. The one whose soul is shut up in prison has a narrow range of activity, and he has little laughter and little joy.

What would there be to be so joyful about in the state of being shut up in prison? To a person shut up in prison, money can be put in from outside, and this is called deposit money for a prisoner. But however much one may want to put in, he can put in only up to a fixed limit. For our part, even though we feel pity and want to give as much as we please, we cannot do so. That is exactly the limit of a person shut up in prison. There is a limit even to the help he receives, and the joy he enjoys within is only within that limit.

The one who is outside can rejoice as greatly as he pleases, but the one who is shut up rejoices only within that narrow limit. So what kind of joy would that be? He lives only because he cannot die. He longs for the world outside and waits for the day when he will someday get out of this sin. But although one can someday escape in this world from what he has done wrong to men, even by working it off with his body, no one can ever come out of the sin that he has committed before God, however much time he spends, until he receives the forgiveness of his debt from God. That is the law of God.

Therefore anyone at all must receive before God the forgiveness of the debt of his sin. The forgiveness of debt is truly a good thing. Even a man who has only a few strands of hair left thinks that if he sweeps those few strands this way and that and covers his head, he can go out before people. But the man who has none at all cannot cover it in that way. The heart is like that too. The man who thinks that he has a little something left in himself tries to cover himself with it, but the man whose heart is wholly empty and who knows that he has nothing at all goes before God just as he is.

The one who asks for compassion before God who is almighty and holy and the Judge, the one who asks Him to have pity on him—such a person receives blessings. If, after

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calculating, it seems that you can solve it by your own strength, then try it once. But if it seems that it can by no means be done, then give it up early and ask for help, saying, “However hard I try, this is a thing that cannot be done, so please bestow compassion on me just once; please remove all that I have.” It is such a person who receives blessings.

The forgiveness of debt is a power that God alone bestows

We are all ones who must receive the forgiveness of debt before God. We must keep in mind that however good and kind the works we do, and however much we try to keep the law, we cannot keep it, and that because of the sin of not having kept it we cannot but go to hell. We are not to say arrogantly, “I will pay it.” We cannot pay even the debts we owe to men.

When a great enterprise falls into a debt that it cannot bear, there are cases in which the nation forgives that debt. Among ordinary people it is hard to write off even a mere few tens of thousands of won, but a great debt that can by no means be paid is forgiven. We receive from God the forgiveness of what we cannot do. It is not that God forgives what we can do; He does for us in full what we can by no means do.

How would we remove the sins that you and I have committed? Do those sins disappear by living a good life, by giving much offering, by attending dawn prayer faithfully, by offering fasting prayer faithfully, by offering prayers of repentance faithfully? That is not the rule. Sin does not disappear by offering prayers of repentance, nor does it disappear by doing good works, nor does it disappear by martyrdom.

Sin disappears through death, through the price of blood, through the price of life. Therefore there is no way but to receive before God the forgiveness of the debt of sin. For us to try to remove sin by ourselves is to attempt what makes no sense. A mountain can someday be climbed if we climb and climb again, but a man's sin does not disappear by making an effort. It is because God has appointed the law in that way.

It says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).* God has appointed the law so that sin should disappear without fail through Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God—that is, through the merit by which Jesus Christ came to this earth, was baptized by John and had our sins passed on to Him, shed His blood and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, and thus washed away our sins.

Therefore we must not strive in order to have our own sins remitted. The one who tells others to strive, and the one who strives, is in the wrong. That person is exactly the man who, having had ten thousand talents forgiven, seized his friend by the collar and threw him into prison, demanding that he pay a hundred denarii. He is a wicked man before God. There are things that a man can accomplish by doing them and things that he cannot; and a man cannot remove his sin by what he does; God must remove it for him.

These days the world is exceedingly difficult. There are still crowds who look holy on the outside but who, when we look inside, are no different at all. This is an age in which the world has already lost all its savor, and yet they feed it something even worse and kill it all the more. But even while living in such an age, we must be truly thankful that in our relationship with God we have received the remission of sin, and we must not be discouraged.

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We must not belong to those crowds who, arguing among themselves over whether a man has sin or not, do not preach the Word of God, and who say that even though one believes in Jesus he is a sinner, that he is righteous and yet a sinner. We must live the rest of our lives giving thanks that we have received the remission of sin before God, and we must preach this gospel abroad as well and make it known to all, so that there may not be even one person who can say that he has not heard it.

We could not solve the problem of sin by ourselves before God. God had compassion on us who were such, and He perfectly forgave the debt of all our sins. In this last age we must believe the perfect salvation accomplished by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and give thanks and give thanks again. It is exactly as it says, *"Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17–18).*

I hope that your hearts may be comforted and at peace. Put away vain thoughts, and do not act as though you would live for thousands and tens of thousands of years. I hope that you will live giving thanks when you have something to eat and to drink, giving thanks that you have received the remission of sin, giving thanks when there is no great suffering, and, even when there is some suffering, giving thanks that there is no suffering greater than that. ✉

◇ Next in the Series: “Matthew Volume 5”

Following this book, the Matthew Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series, Volume 5, which examines Matthew Chapters 19 through 23 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, will soon be published.

> ***Matthew Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (V)***

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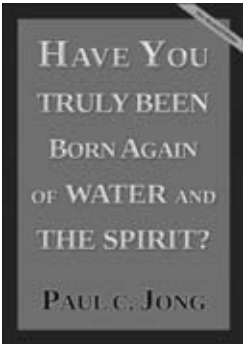
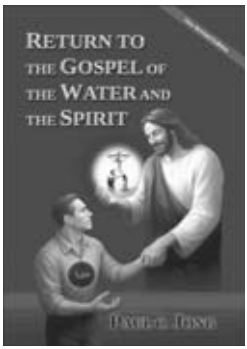
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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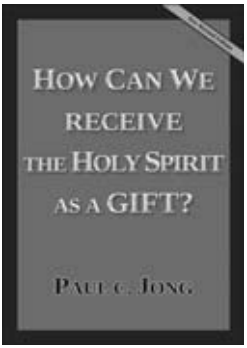
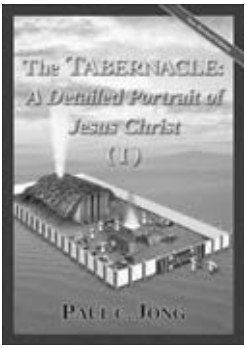
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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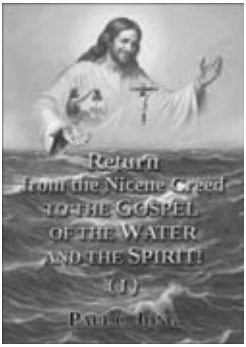
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The 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.

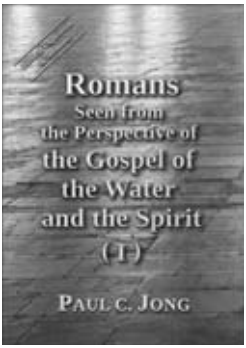
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching 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)

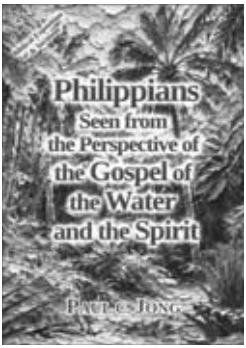


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a Bible study 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.

Philippians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



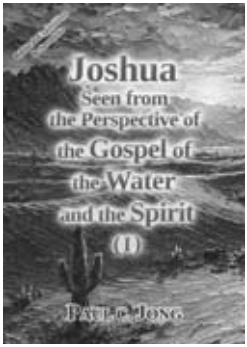
This book offers a fresh understanding of the Epistle to the Philippians from the perspective of the 'gospel of the water and the Spirit.' When we hold fast to the truth that Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John, suffered judgment on the Cross, and was resurrected, the true source of Paul's joy becomes absolutely clear.

Paul discarded everything he once boasted of as rubbish, proclaiming instead the righteousness received from God through faith alone. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have already been delivered from sin and granted citizenship in heaven. Even though our flesh is weak, we are never again placed under condemnation; this is the root of true joy that remains unshaken in any circumstance.

Salvation has been accomplished completely, once and for all. Now, we must believe in this gospel with all our hearts and live boldly, sharing it in our new life. This book serves as a clear guide along that path.

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)

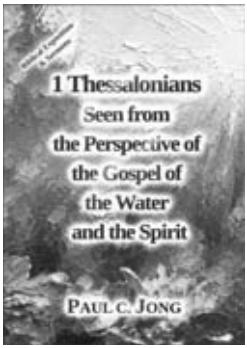


The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy 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



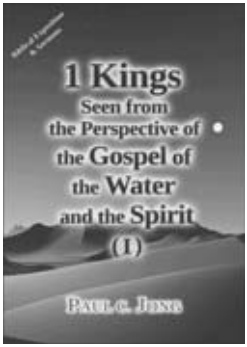
The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered 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)

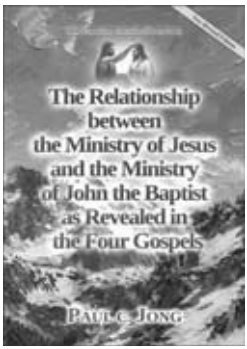


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures 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.

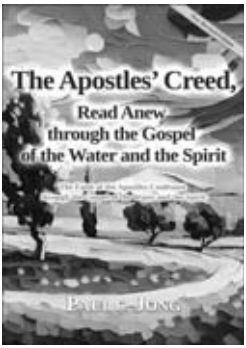
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through 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]

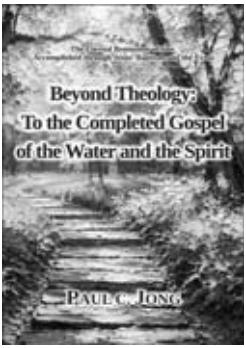


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission 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 (Coming Soon)



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.

Matthew, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

This book examines through the Word of Matthew chapters 14 to 18 what it means to have faith that believes in Jesus rightly, and it makes clear how we are to serve the gospel and souls with that faith. The miracles that Jesus performed teach us what we must believe and how we must live.

In Matthew chapter 14, in contrast to Herod, Jesus appears as the Lord of life who feeds the hungry multitude and rescues His disciple in the midst of the storm. Chapter 15 makes clear that the source of what defiles a man is the sin of his heart, and it shows the mercy He bestowed on the Canaanite woman, who put forward no qualification of her own. Chapters 16–17 teach us to discern false teachings, to build the church upon Christ, and to obey God's command given on the Mount of Transfiguration: *"Hear Him!"* Chapter 18 admonishes us to humble ourselves like little children, to care for the little ones and the lost souls, and to forgive our brothers from the heart.

Jesus, the Son of God, took upon Himself all the sins of mankind by being baptized by John, and after paying the wages of those sins on the cross, He rose from the dead and accomplished the remission of sin. Do not hold on to your own righteousness or to the teachings of men. Believe in the salvation from sin that Jesus has already accomplished for you, and live a life that spreads the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives eternal life.

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