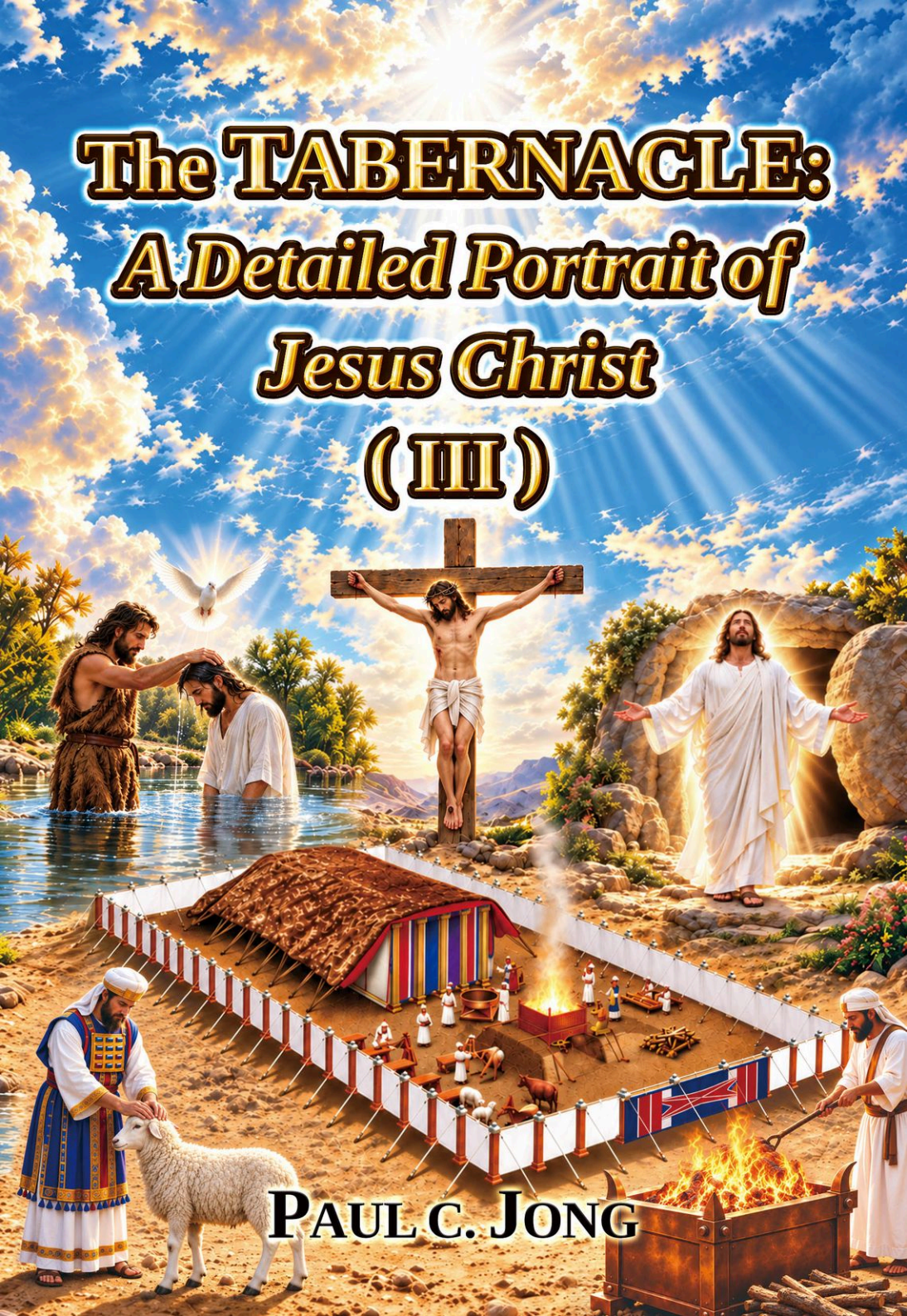
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (III)



PAUL C. JONG



“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.”
(Exodus 25:8)

Why did God have the tabernacle set up in the middle of the wilderness?

The tabernacle contains God’s will to wash sinners, make them His own people, and dwell among them. This book reveals through the tabernacle the saving work of Jesus Christ prefigured in the materials, furnishings, and sacrifices of the tabernacle— that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which He completed through the baptism He received from John, by which He had the sin of the world transferred onto Him, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection.

As we read the word while following the tabernacle, let us learn the faith that draws near to God boldly, relying on the Lord, who has cleanly removed all our sins. From the assurance of the remission of sins to prayer, unity, and the joy of serving the gospel, it leads us on the way of faith of living together with God.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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The TABERNACLE:

A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ

(III)

PAUL C. JONG

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

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The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (III)

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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.

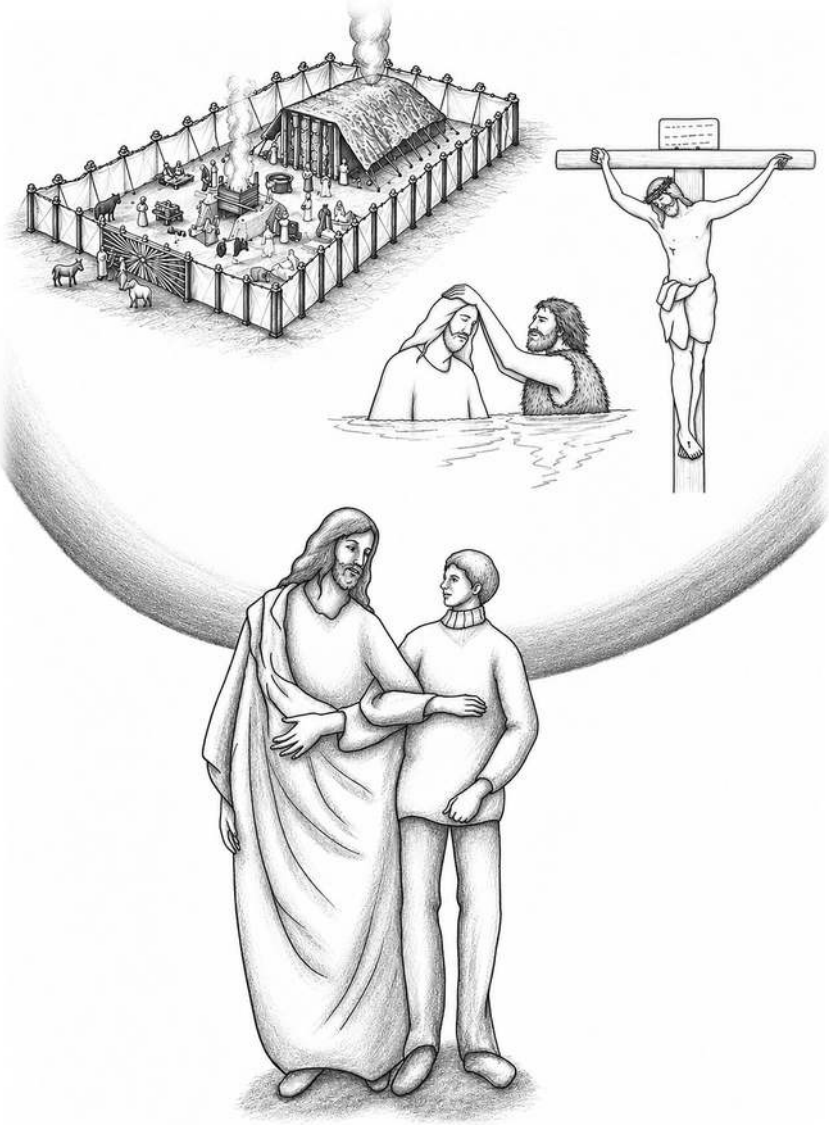
I would also like to thank God's servants and brothers and sisters for their invaluable service in publishing this book. We all worked hard to write this book.

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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Preface

Encountering the remission of sins and God's walking with us in the tabernacle

To what kind of life does God lead us when He saves us from sin? He does not stop at the relief of having escaped the judgment of sin, but leads us to a life of calling God Father and living together with Him. The person who used to hide before God because of his own weakness comes forward with the assurance of the remission of sins, and the person who was bound only to his own problems comes to care about the salvation of other souls. The tabernacle contains this will of God to save sinners, make them His own people, and be with them.

My hope in publishing this book is that you will know that will and come to believe the salvation God accomplished as your own salvation. I hope that as you read the word about the tabernacle you will clearly realize how Jesus Christ bore our sins, and that those who have already received the remission of sins will live on that faith, relying on God all the more. I want this book to be a help to those who have lived a life of faith for a long time yet have no assurance before the problem of sin, to those who, reading the Bible, want to know how the sacrifices of the Old Testament and the work of Jesus are connected, and to those who want to preach clearly to others the gospel they have received.

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God, who desires to dwell among His people

As we read Exodus, we come across the long passage about the materials and measurements of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the garments of the priests. Because unfamiliar names follow one after another, we may find that part difficult. But when we know why God gave this word, the heart with which we read changes. God said to Moses, *"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8)*. When we read with God's will to dwell among the people in mind, the word about the gate and the veil of the tabernacle, and about the offerings and the blood, also comes to us as the word of salvation given to us.

God, who led Israel out of Egypt, intended to be their God and dwell with them. The people had to hear His word in the wilderness and live relying on Him. The tabernacle was at the center of this relationship. God Himself appointed the way to meet Him, gave the law of sacrifice by which to wash away sin, and dwelt among His own people. Therefore, to understand the tabernacle, while learning the shape and use of its furnishings, we must also know the heart of God contained in it. By what way does God call us near, and what must we believe to stand before Him?

This question is pressing for us today as well. Before the word of God we discover the greed and hatred of our hearts and the wrongs we repeat. A resolution to do well from now on does not remove the sins already committed. Neither long prayers nor much service can take the place of the price of sin. What the person who realizes his sin truly needs to know is how God remits that sin. The word of the tabernacle makes us see our own sins, and makes us look to the sacrifice God prepared for those sins.

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From the laying on of hands to the baptism He received from John

God gave the way of atonement in which the sinner laid his hands on the head of an offering without blemish and passed on his sins, and that offering died in his place and shed its blood. The passing on of sin and the receiving of the judgment of that sin were together within the sacrifice. When we know this relationship, we can understand even more clearly why Jesus received baptism from John and why He shed His blood on the Cross. The sacrifices of the tabernacle showed in advance the salvation that Christ, who was to come, would accomplish.

Jesus Christ, who is God, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man. And just as the offering of the Old Testament had sins passed on to it by the laying on of hands, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, who represented mankind, He had all the sin of the world passed on to His own body. Because He bore our sins, the Lord shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment of those sins in our place, and He rose again from death, showed that He is the true God, and became the eternal Savior. Jesus' taking on sin through the baptism He received from John and His paying the price of that sin on the Cross make up one salvation. The person who believes this salvation in his heart receives the remission of all sins once and for all, and the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in that washed heart. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that this book means to tell is precisely this news of salvation.

The blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen with which the gate of the court of the tabernacle was woven also show this salvation. In the blue thread we learn of the baptism Jesus received from John, in the purple thread of

Jesus, who is God and King, in the scarlet thread of the blood of the Cross, and in the fine woven linen of the salvation accomplished according to the word He promised. The One we must meet as we examine the materials of the tabernacle is Jesus Christ, who accomplished all this salvation. We must know and believe both who He is and what He did for us.

For that reason, in this book the word of Exodus and the word of the New Testament are read together. When we examine the laying on of hands on the offering and its blood, we look together at the baptism Jesus received from John and the sacrifice of the Cross, and when we examine the priests and the veil of the Most Holy Place, we look together at the eternal High Priest and the opened way of which Hebrews testifies. This is a matter of coming to know how the salvation promised in the Old Testament was accomplished in Christ. I hope that you will go beyond knowing much about the tabernacle and be able to confirm your own faith by that word.

The unshakable assurance of the remission of sins

Within the sin of the world Jesus bore are included all the sins that you and I commit in our whole lives. It is not that only the sins we remember were passed on to Him, or that He was judged only for the sins committed before we believed. Hebrews testifies, *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*. When we believe this word, we no longer look for the basis of the remission of sins in our own hearts, which change every day. Because the salvation the Lord accomplished is certain, the assurance of those of us who believe that salvation also becomes certain.

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This assurance is connected to many problems of the life of faith. What should we do when weakness is revealed even though we have been saved? What can make new a heart that hesitates, even while praying, over whether one can be accepted by God? What should we rely on when we discover that our own greed is mixed into our serving? The sermons contained in this book bring such questions before the word. Through the word about the laver and the altar of incense, the garments of the priests and the consecration, they examine how, in actual life, we believe in and rely on the grace of the Lord, who washed away sin.

Admitting one's own wrong goes together with faith in the salvation of Christ. We must not hide our wrongs but turn back. If we have hurt someone, we must set it right responsibly. Even then we must remember that the One who removed our sins is Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of trying to supplement the Lord's atonement with the labor of mending our wrongs, but of believing in the Savior, who bore even those sins, and receiving the guidance of the word. I hope this book will awaken in you both the heart to admit sin honestly and the heart to believe fully in the salvation the Lord accomplished.

The salvation we meet as we walk through the tabernacle

The first part of the book contains twenty chapters of topical sermons that examine the tabernacle in order. First we examine God's purpose in having the tabernacle built and the covenant He gave at Mount Sinai, and learn the overall appearance and materials of the tabernacle. Then, following the gate of the court, the altar of burnt offering, and the laver, we

learn the way a sinner draws near to God. In the holy place and the Most Holy Place we read the word about the boards and sockets; the coverings and the veil; the lampstand, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense; and the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat. Those words make us know more deeply the salvation Christ bestowed and the life of the person who believes that salvation.

In the chapters dealing with the garments of the priests, the consecration, and the Day of Atonement, we examine the duty of the priest who stands before God on behalf of the people and the eternal atonement Jesus Christ accomplished. After that we go on to the worship offered every day and holy consecration, the wisdom and unity of those entrusted with the work of God, and the rest God gives. At the end, passing through the failure of the people who made the golden calf and the mercy of God, who established the covenant again, we look at the glory of God that filled the completed tabernacle. Following this flow, you will come to know how the remission of sins and God's walking with us are connected.

The forty expository sermons in the latter part take hold of one question at a time from among the words examined earlier and preach it more deeply. They ask where we place the basis of faith, whether we are trying to pay the price of sin with our own resolutions, how we draw near to God even on the day we have failed, and why people who have received different gifts must serve together. From knowing and believing the content of salvation to prayer, fellowship, and serving, they have been made so that readers can examine their own hearts and lives by the word.

Those reading for the first time would do well to learn the overall flow of the tabernacle in the first part and then go on to the expository sermons. Those familiar with the tabernacle can

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look back on their own faith by reading each topic together with the expository sermons connected to it. You need not strive to memorize all the measurements and names from the start. Come to know where each furnishing was placed and for what work it was used, and look at the salvation Christ accomplished in that word. The more unfamiliar the text, the more it helps to open the Bible alongside it and read slowly.

As you read, you will meet again and again the word about the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. Whether examining the gate and the altar, or examining the service of the priests and the Day of Atonement, we return to the Lord, who saved us. Each time, look at how this salvation is related to the word you are reading. You will come to know how the same gospel upholds our faith when the remission of sins is explained and when prayer is urged, when the weak are comforted and when serving together is urged.

Above all, I hope you will receive the word of the Bible with the faith of your own heart. Being able to explain the content of salvation and believing that salvation as the remission of one's own sins are different. One may know that Jesus bore the sin of the world and yet regard one's own sins as still something one must resolve oneself. As you read this book, believe that your own sins, too, are all included in the sins the Lord bore. When we trust the word of salvation God gave more than our own feelings, true rest comes even to the heart that was weighed down by sin.

The life in which the saved serve together

And the joy of reading the tabernacle leads from the assurance of the remission of sins to the life of serving God. God has given us who are saved the food of the word, the grace to pray, and brothers and sisters to live together with. Examining the lampstand joined from one piece of gold and the boards connected to one another, we also learn why people saved by the same gospel must unite their hearts. Because we know that the grace that saved me has also saved the person beside me, we can help one another in our shortcomings with the word and serve together.

Not everyone does the same work. There are those who preach the word, those who make and translate books so that that word may be preached to others, and those who supply what is needed and help by prayer. These labors offered for the same gospel are used together. God, who gave wisdom to Bezalel and Aholiab and had them teach others, today also gives us who are lacking the grace we need and has us work together. That a person who used to look only at the size of his own ability comes to rely on God and value the labor of other members is also a fruit of faith this book hopes for.

At the foundation of all this serving is the salvation already received. We do not serve in order to become children of God; we serve because we have received the remission of sins and become His children. The person who has found rest from the labor of trying to save himself works for the gospel with a thankful heart, and even in the midst of that labor waits for the eternal rest the Lord will give. The faith we learn through the tabernacle is thus connected to today's life and even to the hope ahead.

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God, who is with us under the cloud

At the end of Exodus appear the cloud that covered the tabernacle and the fire in its midst. The people still had a way ahead to walk, but God was with them. We, too, have matters not yet resolved and labor we must carry out. On that way, the One we rely on is God, who washed away sin and made us His own people. I hope that at the end of this book you will not only have come to know more about the tabernacle, but will also come to believe in and rely on that God more clearly.

I hope that those who do not yet have the assurance of the remission of sins will meet, through this book, the salvation Jesus accomplished. I hope that those who already believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit will engrave anew in their hearts the grace they have received, and gain the boldness to draw near to God and the strength to serve together. Let us examine together, within the word of the tabernacle, what Jesus Christ, who came to save us, accomplished through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. I hope that the hearts of you who believe in this salvation will be filled with the joy of the remission of sins and the peace of God's presence. ✉

CONTENTS

Preface 7

Topical Sermons

Chapter 1 Why we should read the tabernacle 25
Exodus 25:8–9; 29:45–46

Chapter 2 The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai 37
Exodus 19:1–6; 24:8

Chapter 3 Seeing the tabernacle at a glance 51
Exodus 26:33–35; 40:1–8

Chapter 4 The materials God appointed and the offerings of joy 66
Exodus 25:1–9; 35:29

Chapter 5 The gate of the court woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread 82
Exodus 27:9–19; Matthew 3:13–17; 1 John 5:6–8

Chapter 6 The altar of burnt offering and the sacrifice for sinners 98
Exodus 27:1–8; Leviticus 1:3–5

Chapter 7 The laver and the assurance of the washing away of sins 112
Exodus 30:17–21; 38:8

Chapter 8 The sanctuary set up on boards and sockets 125
Exodus 26:29–30

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Chapter 9 The coverings and the veil, and the way opened 137
Exodus 26:31–37; Hebrews 10:19–22

Chapter 10 The seven lamps that light the holy place 151
Exodus 25:31–40; 27:20–21

Chapter 11 The bread placed before God always 165
Exodus 25:23–30; Leviticus 24:5–9

Chapter 12 The prayer offered at the altar of incense 180
Exodus 30:1–10, 34–38

Chapter 13 The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat, the place where God meets us 196
Exodus 25:22; Leviticus 16:11–16

Chapter 14 The priest who bears the names of the people ... 214
Exodus 28:12, 29

Chapter 15 The consecration that establishes the priests 228
Exodus 29:4, 10

Chapter 16 From the Day of Atonement to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ 242
Leviticus 16:30; Hebrews 9:12

Chapter 17 Daily worship and holy separation 255
Exodus 29:38–46; 30:11–16, 22–33

Chapter 18 The hands and the wisdom entrusted with the work of God 270
Exodus 31:1–11; 35:34

Chapter 19 The rest God gives 284
Exodus 31:12–18; 35:1–3

Chapter 20 The glory of God that fills our midst 296
Exodus 40:34–35; Ephesians 2:19–22

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Textual Sermons

Sermon 1 Our faith, which we confirm again before the tabernacle 317
Exodus 25:8–9

Sermon 2 Boldness to draw near to God learned through the tabernacle 326
Hebrews 10:19–22

Sermon 3 The price of sin that cannot be paid with resolutions 335
Exodus 24:3–8

Sermon 4 A heart that serves only God, who delivered us 344
Exodus 20:1–6

Sermon 5 Christ, who qualified us to draw near to God 353
Exodus 26:31–35

Sermon 6 God, who saved us, also gives the strength to serve 362
Exodus 40:1–8

Sermon 7 The faith we offer to God and the merit we put forward 372
Exodus 25:1–9

Sermon 8 The joy of the offering that lets people hear the gospel 381
Exodus 35:29; 36:2–7

Sermon 9 The remission of sins assured by the witness of God 391
Exodus 27:16; 1 John 5:6–12

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Sermon 10 One who clearly proclaims the door of salvation 400
Exodus 38:18–19; John 1:29–34

Sermon 11 God, who accepts sinners, and the offering without blemish 410
Leviticus 1:3–5

Sermon 12 The sacrifice that makes us love the Lord again 419
Exodus 27:1–8

Sermon 13 Assurance that sin is washed away lies in what the Lord has done 429
Exodus 30:17–21

Sermon 14 The Lord, who first washed the feet of a disciple who would fail 438
John 13:1–11

Sermon 15 The two gifts of salvation that hold us fast 449
Exodus 26:15–19

Sermon 16 Why we who received the same salvation serve together 457
Exodus 26:26–30

Sermon 17 Why the despised Savior is precious to us 465
Exodus 36:19; Isaiah 53:1–6

Sermon 18 The faith of the heart that enters by the opened way 472
Exodus 26:31–33

Sermon 19 The light of the gospel that washes away sin cannot be changed 479
Exodus 27:20–21

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Sermon 20 The light of the gospel that different members shine together 488
Exodus 25:31–37

Sermon 21 The word of life we must eat today as well 496
Leviticus 24:5–9

Sermon 22 Faith offered today as well, while problems remain 505
Exodus 25:23–30

Sermon 23 Prayer offered to the Lord, who washed away sin 514
Exodus 30:7–10

Sermon 24 Let us take on prayer for the gospel together 523
Exodus 30:6–8

Sermon 25 Faith that draws near to God, not asserting my righteousness 531
Exodus 25:21–22

Sermon 26 Take on the gospel through which God met us, and cherish and serve it 541
Exodus 25:12–22

Sermon 27 The Lord, who bore even the sins of us who serve 552
Exodus 28:36–38

Sermon 28 Right judgment by one who holds souls in his heart 560
Exodus 28:15–30

Sermon 29 The priests who eat together by grace 569
Exodus 29:31–34

Sermon 30 Service offered as fine flour 577
Exodus 29:1–9

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Sermon 31 The sins that God will remember no more 585
Hebrews 10:14–18

Sermon 32 One who serves the living God with a clean conscience 594
Hebrews 9:11–14

Sermon 33 Faith that holds fast the promise even on days we are lacking 603
Hebrews 10:19–25

Sermon 34 The labor of serving the same gospel is precious 611
Exodus 30:26–33

Sermon 35 God, who gives wisdom to workers who are lacking 620
Exodus 31:1–6

Sermon 36 Faith that rejoices when other workers grow 628
Exodus 35:30–35

Sermon 37 Receive the gospel you heard with your own faith 636
Hebrews 4:1–11

Sermon 38 At the end of our labor there is the Lord's rest 645
Exodus 31:15–17; John 14:1–3

Sermon 39 God, who leads us even on days we remain 654
Exodus 40:34–38

Sermon 40 The fullness of Christ revealed through members who are lacking 663
Ephesians 1:20–23

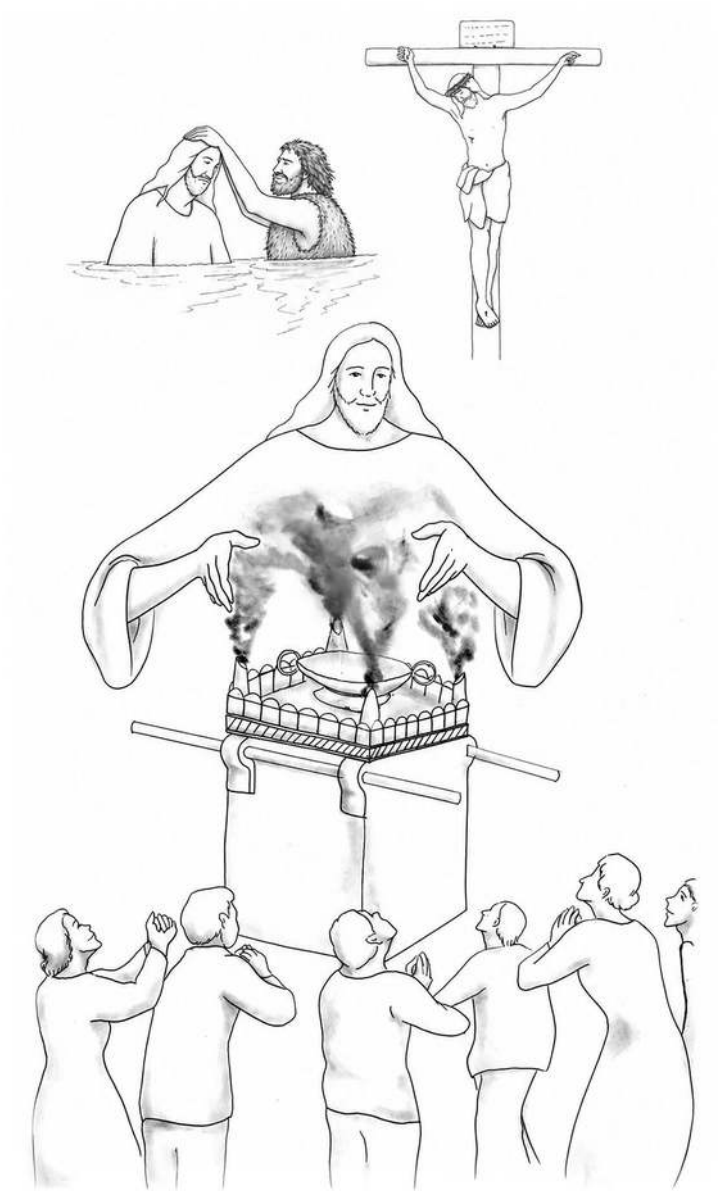
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Topical Sermons

Chapters 1–20

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Chapter 1

Why we should read the tabernacle

Read Together Matthew 3:13–17 · Hebrews 9:11–14; 10:19–22 · Ephesians 2:19–22

< Exodus 25:8–9 >

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.”

< Exodus 29:45–46 >

“I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.”

The question we meet before an ancient tent

When we read Exodus and come to the words about making the tabernacle, unfamiliar words appear. Acacia wood and gold rings, blue thread and purple thread, boards and sockets follow one after another. When lengths and widths are repeated, it is hard even to picture in our minds where each thing is placed. Even people who have read the Bible diligently slow their steps

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at this passage. We wonder what the materials and measurements of a tent set up in the wilderness thousands of years ago teach our faith today.

The first step in understanding the tabernacle is to hear why God told them to make it. Exodus 25:8 tells us its purpose. God has a sanctuary made in which He will dwell among the people of Israel. Here the sanctuary means a holy place set apart to belong to God. If we first hold on to the promise that God will dwell among His people, we can also read the furnishings and the ordinances of the sacrifices that follow within that promise.

But this promise leaves us with one deep question. How can the holy God be with sinful people? People repeat their wrongs, cannot let go of their self-centered thoughts, and want to hide even before God. The tabernacle makes us face this very question instead of avoiding it. It makes us learn both God's will to be with us and how our sins must be dealt with, together.

God, who desires to dwell among the people He has saved

The tabernacle is set within the story of the Exodus. God saw the suffering of Israel and led them out of slavery in Egypt. The people gained their freedom, but in the wilderness they had to learn where they should go and whose word they should live by. The Exodus did not end in a freedom to leave God and go one's own way. God became their God, and they were called to live as His people.

Exodus 29:45–46 explains this relationship even more clearly. God says that He will dwell among Israel and be their God. He also lets them know that He brought them out of Egypt in order to dwell among them. A life lived together with

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God is included in the purpose of salvation. When we read these words, we can see what place the long description of the tabernacle holds in the story of the Exodus.

God is not One who was asked to come after the people had first prepared a dwelling for Him. God saved the people, He spoke first, and He had them set up a sanctuary in which He would dwell among them. The offerings and labor of the people were also a response to this calling. At the beginning of the work of making the tabernacle are the will and grace of God.

This fact makes us look back on the heart with which we serve God. We sometimes think that God will come near only if we offer more and accomplish more work. But the One who begins the story of the tabernacle is God. We hear the purpose He has spoken, learn the way He has prepared, and respond with a thankful heart.

The way of drawing near to God was the way of solving sin

In the tabernacle there is the door of the tabernacle, and the veil that divides the holy place from the Most Holy Place is set in place. At the altar of burnt offering the sacrifices are offered, and the high priest ministers according to the ordinances that have been set. The reason God gave the tabernacle is to remove our sins and to dwell together among us. The law of sacrifice of the tabernacle is to teach sinners the remission of sins.

Among these, the ordinances of the sacrifices are the method by which the sins of sinners are atoned for, and they teach how the sin of mankind is remitted before God. Leviticus 1:3–5 shows the process in which a person who brings a bull as

a burnt offering lays his hand on the head of that offering and passes his sins on to it, and that offering dies and pays the wages of sin. On the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, the high priest lays his hands on the head of the sacrificial goat, passes the sins of the people on to it, and offers the sacrifice of atonement. The procedure of each sacrifice is different, but we learn the fact that the reason for drawing near to God is to have one's own sins solved.

Admitting one's own sins is not easy. We sometimes make our own wrongs small by comparing them with the wrongs of others. We also try to cover our own sins with the labors of days gone by. But when we study the tabernacle, each of us must admit our own sins before God and receive the grace of the remission of sins that the Lord gives. When we admit the fact that we need to receive the remission of sins, we come to realize that the word about the atonement the Lord has prepared is what we ourselves need.

In the light of the Lord's law, we are not people who can become righteous by ourselves by correcting a few of our wrongs. Our sins are exposed before God, who examines even the greed and hatred that rise in our hearts. Since the judgment of sin follows every sin, we come to realize the need to have our own sins washed away by the sacrificial offering the Lord has prepared. What a sinner needs is not words that will evaluate him favorably but a salvation that actually removes his sins. We must realize that the sacrificial offering of the tabernacle is what we ourselves need. God has prepared the way for sinners to be saved from their own sins.

God taught the sinful people the way to receive the remission of their own sins. He prepared the way so that they could draw near to God. In the tabernacle we see ourselves

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standing before the holy God, and at the same time we see the sacrifice of God's mercy by which He intends to solve our sins.

Looking at Jesus Christ in the tabernacle

When Christians read the tabernacle, it helps to read the Book of Hebrews together with it. Through the tabernacle, the priests, and the sacrifices, Hebrews explains what Jesus Christ accomplished. Christ came as the High Priest and accomplished eternal atonement with His own blood. When we compare the sacrifices that were offered repeatedly with the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ, it becomes even clearer whom we rely on to draw near to God.

We must look at the saving work of Christ through the sacrifices of the tabernacle. The baptism Jesus received from John must be understood and read together with them as the work by which He Himself bore our sins and solved them for us. When we connect the laying on of hands on the sacrifices of the Old Testament with the baptism of Jesus, we learn the reason Jesus bore all the sin of mankind once and for all through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of sin on the Cross for that sin, and so brought salvation. We must believe in the Savior, who removed our sins through the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death. This good news of salvation is the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the word of the Lord.

The reason we read the laying on of hands in the Old Testament together with the baptism Jesus received from John is to know to whom the sin of the world was passed on. Just as a sinless sacrifice takes on the sins of a sinner and is sacrificed,

by receiving baptism from John, Jesus had the sin of the world transferred onto Him and became the sacrificial offering once and for all. The Cross is the place where Jesus, who had the sin of the world transferred onto Him, received the judgment of the sin of mankind in our place. When we believe the work of bearing sin at His baptism and the work of paying the wages of sin on the Cross as one, we come to know clearly that the death of Jesus became the sacrificial offering for all our sins. The Lord rose again from His own death and became the Savior of those who believe.

In the baptism the Lord received from John are included all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die. We must know that not only the sins we already remember but also the sins we have not yet counted and the weaknesses that will be exposed in the future belong within the Lord's salvation and have been removed. The remission of sins is not something obtained as the result of my repenting of the list of my sins without missing a single one. We must know and believe in our hearts the fact that the Lord bore all the sin of mankind once and for all through the baptism He received from John. As you read the word, you must not reduce the scope of your remission of sins.

Matthew chapter 3 records Jesus receiving baptism from John. Jesus says that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness. In 1 John chapter 5 there is the word that Jesus Christ came by water and blood, and that the Spirit bears witness. Reading these words together with the sacrifices of the Old Testament, we will look into the meaning of salvation contained in the tabernacle. In the chapters that follow, we will explain in order the context of each passage and how it connects to the work of Christ.

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We will also read the explanation of the blue thread within this flow of salvation. The blue thread is explained in connection with the baptism Jesus received from John, the purple thread with the divinity and kingship of Jesus, and the scarlet thread with the blood of the Cross. The fine woven linen makes us look at the word that God promises and fulfills. Understanding the saving work of Christ through the materials of the tabernacle in this way is called typological interpretation.

Here, if we make one distinction, our understanding becomes clearer. Exodus tells us the materials used in the tabernacle and the regulations for making it. When we connect those materials to the work of Jesus, we must read the words of the New Testament together with them in order to understand. In this book we will explain in order the actual appearance of the tabernacle and its typological meaning pointing to Christ. As we deal with each material and furnishing, let us open the supporting passages directly and look at them together.

The faith that receives the remission of one's own sins makes us acknowledge more deeply in our hearts the saving work Christ accomplished on this earth

Even when we learn about the tabernacle, our interest can stop at memorizing the materials and measurements of the tabernacle. What I want to share with you through this book is the faith that knows the salvation of Christ and has the assurance of the remission of sins. We must examine our own hearts to see what we are relying on when we draw near before God.

Our feelings change from day to day. On some days thanksgiving is abundant, but on other days our hearts are heavy and even prayer does not go well. When we discover our own shortcomings, we sometimes feel as if we cannot go near to God. At such times we must look again at the work of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished once and for all. This is also the reason Hebrews urges drawing near to God after explaining the baptism of Jesus, the sacrifice, and the blood.

The assurance of the remission of sins must be founded on believing the truth of salvation accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John and the sacrificial blood of the Cross. Rather than dwelling on how deeply I was moved or how long I have led a religious life, we must look at how Jesus bore the sins of sinners on His own body through His baptism. Studying the tabernacle in this book is also meant to bring us back to that question.

The word of the Bible calls a person who has received the remission of sins through faith in the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit a righteous person. It is not that one is called righteous by boasting of one's own deeds, but because the truth that Jesus bore the sin of the world once and for all through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of sin, and rose again from death is testified to us through the word. The weakness of the flesh is still exposed as long as we live. But every time our weakness is exposed, we must not conclude that salvation has not yet been completed. We receive the remission of sins when, while admitting our own sins, we can rely, for all those sins, on the baptism Jesus received from John once and for all and on the blood of the Cross. In this way, the assurance of the remission of sins in our

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hearts can be made complete together with a heart that honestly sees our own wrongs in our lives.

Relying on the salvation of Christ does not mean taking one's own wrongs lightly. We must admit our wrongs and turn from them, and we must show a responsible attitude toward those we have hurt. However, we do not think that by such actions we fill up what is lacking in the atonement of Christ. Ephesians chapter 2 says that those who have been saved through the gift of salvation that Jesus gives were created for good works.

The church being built up together with faith in the word of salvation God has given

As we look at the sanctuary in which God dwells, we come to look back on our own hearts as well. It is important to receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and to live as people in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. Learning about the tabernacle leads from looking at a tent of the distant past to looking back on one's own faith today.

At this point our faith also leads to the community in which we live together. Ephesians 2:19–22 teaches that the saints are the household of God, and that, joined to one another in Christ, they are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. The confession that God dwells in me makes us think of the relationship in which we live belonging to the Lord together with our brothers and sisters.

Just as the tabernacle was set up according to the pattern God showed, we must also receive into our hearts the word of salvation that God has established. We must lay down the

thought of washing away sin in the way I want and of receiving God only after I have made enough effort to satisfy myself. The heart that believes that all sins have been remitted through the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross is the sanctuary in which God dwells. The Holy Spirit is not One who comes because we have built a great building or produced strong emotions. He dwells in those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit with their hearts.

This faith makes us go out toward other souls. Those who have first received the remission of sins come to preach the baptism and the Cross of Jesus to those who do not yet know the gospel. When someone hears the word of the gospel we preach, believes it in his heart, and receives the remission of sins, that heart also becomes a dwelling place in which God dwells. And that person preaches the gospel to others. In this way, those who believe in the same word of the gospel of salvation are built up together in Christ. In this way, the purpose of caring for one another and joining our strength in the Lord's church also contains the will to have other souls receive the remission of sins.

When we serve together, our personalities and thoughts may clash. At such times we must lay down the heart that wants to put ourselves forward and remember that we have all been saved by the same grace. Those who teach the word, those who help with what is needed, and those who give their time and possessions gather their strength within the same gospel. Through that service the news of salvation is preached to our close neighbors and also to people in faraway places. The joy that God dwells among us leads to a life of serving so that others may also enjoy that grace.

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Now let us read the tabernacle together

From now on we will look at the gate and the court of the tabernacle, learn the use of the altar of burnt offering and the laver, and read the words about the holy place and the Most Holy Place. We will also look at the garments of the priests and their consecration, the daily sacrifices, and the Day of Atonement. We intend to look at pictures in order to understand the structure, to read the surrounding context of the Bible in order to understand the meaning, and to think together about the saving work of Christ.

There is no need to remember all the names from the beginning. Each time we meet a new furnishing, we only need to look one by one at where it was placed, how it was used, and what the word about it teaches. And when we connect that word to Jesus Christ, we will also read the basis for the connection together.

The question we will keep holding on to through the tabernacle is this: How can God be with sinful people, and what can we believe in order to draw near to Him? With this question in our hearts, in the next chapter we will look at the words that tell of the people of Israel from the time they left Egypt until they reached Mount Sinai.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do Exodus 25:8 and 29:45–46 explain the purpose for which God had the tabernacle set up?

2. How are the baptism of Jesus and the Cross connected to our salvation? Think about this while reading Matthew 3:13–17 and Hebrews 9:11–14 together.

3. What is the basis for calling a person who has received the remission of sins a righteous person? How can I take part in the work by which the church that believes the same gospel preaches that salvation to others? ✉

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Chapter 2

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

Read Together Genesis 15:1–21; 17:7–11 · Exodus 2:23–25; 20:1–17 · Matthew 26:26–28 · Hebrews 9:11–22

< Exodus 19:1–6 >

"In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.'"

< Exodus 24:8 >

"And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.'"

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The promise to remember before reaching the tabernacle

Before we stand at the door of the tabernacle, we must know the story of the people who were led there. How did Israel come to gather in the wilderness? Why did God tell them to make a sanctuary in which He would dwell among them? To understand the first sentence of Exodus chapter 25, we must read together the story of salvation and covenant that comes before it.

This story goes back to the promise given to Abraham. In Genesis chapter 15, God promised descendants to Abraham, who had no children. At that time his name recorded in the Bible was Abram. It was a word that was hard to accept in view of the circumstances before his eyes. But Abraham believed God, and God accounted it to him for righteousness. After explaining his faith, the Bible records the scene in which God establishes a covenant.

That day God spoke of how the descendants of Abraham would become strangers in another land and suffer affliction, and how God would judge the nation that made them serve. Readers who read of the slavery in Egypt and the Exodus come to remember this promise. Exodus chapter 2 also says that God, who heard the groaning of the people, remembered the covenant He had established with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The One who leads the story of salvation is God, who keeps His promises.

A covenant refers to the promise and the relationship that God established by His word. In that covenant, the faithfulness of God and the word the people must follow appear together. In Genesis chapter 17, God promised to be the God of Abraham and of his descendants, and gave circumcision as the sign of

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that covenant. The people had to live remembering to whom they belonged.

In the covenant scene of Genesis chapter 15, there appear the animals God told Abraham to bring and the fire that passed between the pieces of cut meat. Reading this scene, we take to heart the fact that God Himself fulfills His promise. We must also remember the order: this covenant scene follows after the Bible first records that Abraham believed God and was accounted righteous. He did not purchase righteousness by the act of preparing the sacrifices. When we read the sacrifices of the tabernacle, too, we must look at God, who fulfills His promise through a sacrifice. That flow finally reaches Jesus Christ, who bore our sins and gave Himself.

From the circumcision of the covenant to the faith by which the sin of the heart is cut off

The circumcision given to Abraham was the sign of the covenant performed on the body. Now let us look more deeply at what it means to become a person who belongs to God through that sign. What matters to us is the question of how the sin of the heart is removed. Cutting off a part of the body does not mean that the sin of the heart is removed as well. Even if we try to cut away evil thoughts by our own resolve, our weakness appears again. The spiritual circumcision by which sin is cut off from the heart is received by believing in the work by which Jesus Christ bore our sins.

To know that relationship, we must read the sacrifices of the Old Testament together with the baptism of Jesus. In the Old Testament, a sinner laid his hands on the sacrifice God had appointed and went forward on the way of the remission of sins

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

through the sacrifice that was offered in his place. The meaning of this laying on of hands is fulfilled in the event of Jesus receiving baptism from John. Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism, and bore the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Because the Lord took on and removed the sins that I could not cut off, the remission of sins is accomplished in the heart that believes that word.

To receive spiritual circumcision is to believe that one's own sins passed on to Jesus and that the Lord paid the wages of those sins. The basis of salvation is the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood He shed on the Cross. The circumcision we receive or the rite of water baptism itself cannot take the place of that work. We must believe with our hearts the word of the truth of salvation that Jesus accomplished. A person whose sins have all been remitted through that faith becomes a child who belongs to God.

Just as Abraham believed the promise of God, we too believe in the salvation that God promised and fulfilled. The expression "descendants of faith" does not stop at meaning that we imitate a few of Abraham's actions. It is to believe God's promise rather than human circumstances, and to rely on Christ, who fulfilled that promise. Here is the reason the covenant of circumcision is important to us who read the tabernacle. God does not leave us as we are in sin, but makes us live as His people within the grace by which He has cut off our sin.

God first led the people out

Israel came to the Wilderness of Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt. When the people camped before the mountain, God called Moses. And through Moses He first

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made the people remember what He had done. God says that He bore them on eagles' wings and brought them to Himself.

The thing to keep in our hearts here is that God brought the people to Himself. The people had escaped from the oppression of Egypt, and now they were called to live as a people belonging to God. The joy of liberation leads to a relationship with God. If we know this relationship, we can also understand why the tabernacle is within the story of the Exodus.

We must also look at the order of the words. God told the people to keep the covenant after He had spoken of the salvation He had already accomplished. The beginning of the Ten Commandments is the same. God gives the commandments after making Himself known as the God who brought them out of slavery in Egypt. The people had to know who the God who had saved them was, and respond to His word.

That does not mean, however, that the demand for obedience should be taken lightly. In Exodus 19:5 there is clearly the condition of hearing the word of God and keeping the covenant. The grace God has given calls the people to a life of hearing His word. Only when we read the grace of salvation and the responsibility of the covenant people together do we avoid missing the meaning of this passage.

We too, when we look back on our life of faith, need to remember first the grace God has bestowed. If we look only at the list of things to do, faith easily becomes a heavy duty. But when we look at God, who has called me, the reason for obedience becomes clear. For hearing and following the word of God is the life of the people who belong to Him.

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

God's special treasure, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation

God says that Israel will become His special treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These expressions feel unfamiliar, but they all explain the relationship between God and the people. God intends to keep them near Him and to establish them as a people who serve Him.

The expression "God's special treasure" contains the meaning of belonging to Him in a special way. At the same time, God says that all the earth is His. When we read the calling of Israel, too, we must remember God, who is the Lord of the whole world. What the people have to boast of is not their own superiority but the grace of God, who called them.

The expression "a kingdom of priests" shows that the whole people was called to serve God. Later, in the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons take on the office of the priests. Therefore this expression does not mean that every Israelite was given the same authority of service in the tabernacle. We must read the calling of the whole people and the office held within the tabernacle as distinct from each other.

The expression "a holy nation" also needs to be looked at. Holiness is related to being set apart to belong to God. The people who belong to Him must show that relationship in worship and in life. They are called to a life that honors the name of God, treasures the life and the family of their neighbor, and does not covet what belongs to others.

In this respect, the words at Mount Sinai are also connected to life outside the tabernacle. God commands them not to oppress the stranger and not to afflict the widow and the fatherless. The people who were oppressed in Egypt must now care about the suffering of others. The attitude of worshiping

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before God and the attitude with which one treats one's neighbor lie together within the life of one people.

People who stood before the holy God

The scene of meeting God at Mount Sinai is full of solemnity. God commands the people to consecrate themselves, wash their clothes, and prepare. Boundaries are set around the mountain. Thunderings and lightnings, a thick cloud, and the sound of a trumpet appear, and when God descends in fire, the mountain quakes greatly.

The people come to learn both the fact that God has called them and the fact that they cannot approach Him carelessly. The God who saved them from Egypt is holy. Even the people who have received grace cannot draw near to God as they see fit. They must follow the way He has spoken.

In this scene the role of Moses stands out. God calls Moses and speaks to him. Moses tells that word to the people and reports the people's response to God. Exodus 19:9 makes clear God's intention that the people hear God speaking with Moses and so come to trust Moses. The people's faith had to be directed toward the word God had given, not toward Moses' own thoughts.

Look at God's calling of Moses within the flow in which He teaches the way of the law and the sacrifices. The people had to know the will of God, had to know their own sins as well, and had to learn the way of the remission of sins that God had prepared. If we remember this flow, we can read the ordinances of the tabernacle and the sacrifices that follow more seriously.

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

For us too there is an attitude needed before we hear the word. It is a heart that wants to learn who God is, without hurrying on because we think we already know. The more familiar a Bible passage is, the easier it is to put our own thoughts in first. Together with the people at Mount Sinai, we must stop for a moment and listen with a reverent heart to the word of the One who calls us.

Before the word we discover our sins

The commandments of God tell the people the way they are to live. The words telling them to serve God alone, to honor their parents, and not to bear false witness against their neighbor are concrete. A life that belongs to God includes the words and actions of daily life, and even the greed of the heart.

When we hold that word up to ourselves, our sins are also exposed. Even a person who examined only outward actions comes to examine his heart before the commandment not to covet. Even a person who considered himself all right by comparing himself with others must become honest before the standard God has spoken. The word shakes the attitude of regarding ourselves as righteous by a standard we have set for ourselves.

Through the law we come to know our own sins. Paul also explains in Romans 3:20 that by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law reveals the fact that we are sinners and the fact that judgment follows sin. A person who tried to make himself righteous before God is brought to a stop before this word. Keeping a few of the commandments does not remove other sins, and the resolve to do better in the future cannot remove the judgment of the sins already committed.

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In the word God gave to Moses there are, together with the law that exposes sin, the ordinances of the sacrifices He prepared so that sins might be remitted. We must know these two roles together. A person who has realized his sin before the law goes forward on the way of the sacrifice God has appointed. The law of sacrifice, in which one lays his hands on the sacrifice and relies on that sacrifice, shows the salvation in which Jesus would bear sin through His baptism and be judged by shedding His blood. We cannot remove by our own strength the sin the law has exposed, but the salvation God has prepared actually remits that sin.

Therefore we must not entrust the remission of sins to the number of our prayers of repentance or to our gradually improving conduct. Regretting and correcting our wrongs is necessary. But it is not that as much sin is removed because we have offered one more prayer, nor that we become that much more righteous because our character has become a little better. The salvation Jesus accomplished through His baptism and the Cross is complete. The remission of sins is received by believing in that salvation, and through that faith we become righteous.

Even those who have been saved examine their hearts by the word

Then do those who have received the remission of sins have no need of the commandments of God? The people who heard the word at Mount Sinai were already a people who had been led out of Egypt. God gave them the standard for serving Him and for living with their neighbors. Today we too must realize our wrongs through the word and set our hearts and lives right.

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

We cannot say that lying and greed are all right because we have been saved. If we have hurt someone, we must admit that wrong and turn from it responsibly.

When a wrong is exposed before the word, our hearts can grow dark. At such times there is no need to hide our sin or to think that the salvation we have already received has collapsed. Through His baptism the Lord bore even the sin that is exposed now, and He was judged on the Cross. We can believe that fact again and give thanks to God. The prayer that admits our wrong and the heart that believes in the completed remission of sins go together. When we think that prayer produces a new atonement, the basis of salvation becomes blurred.

In this way we live knowing what we are like through the law and washing our hearts with the word of grace. Since we are reflecting by faith on the salvation by which He has already washed us, there is no need for Jesus to be baptized or sacrificed again. The word of God sets right the heart that justified its wrongs, and the gospel raises up the heart that has collapsed because of those wrongs. The people who have received the remission of sins keep the holiness of their hearts within this faith and serve God.

The blood of the covenant and the meal before God

In Exodus chapter 24, a covenant is made between God and the people. When Moses tells the people the words and the ordinances of God, the people respond that they will obey. Moses writes down the words and builds an altar at the foot of the mountain. He also sets up twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

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The young men of Israel offer burnt offerings and peace offerings. Moses puts half of the blood in basins and sprinkles half on the altar. The basins here are vessels for holding the blood. Then he reads the Book of the Covenant to the people. The people respond again that they will follow the word, and Moses sprinkles the blood on them and declares that it is the blood of the covenant God has made according to these words.

In this scene, hearing the word, the response of the people, and the sacrifice and the blood appear together. The covenant is not treated as a momentary feeling or a light promise. The people stand under the word God has given, and take part in the solemn occasion in which the covenant is established with the blood of the sacrificial offerings.

Next, Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel go up. The Bible records that they saw God, and that God did not lay His hand on them. They eat and drink before God. The representatives of the people, who earlier had been afraid before the holiness of God, now eat a meal in the place that has been permitted. In the covenant scene, along with solemnity, there appears the grace by which God receives them.

Christians, as they read of this blood of the covenant, also hear the words of Jesus. Jesus, giving the cup to His disciples, spoke of His blood as the blood of the covenant shed for the remission of sins. Hebrews also explains that the first covenant was not established without blood, and presents Christ as the Mediator of the new covenant. The New Testament leads us to the salvation Christ accomplished by offering Himself.

When we read the sacrifices of the Old Testament in connection with the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross, we can look into the salvation in which Jesus bore the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. However, Exodus chapter 24 itself does not record a scene of laying hands on a sacrifice. The relationship between the laying on of hands and baptism will be dealt with in more detail when we look at the passages on the sacrifices later. Here we first take to heart the grace by which God establishes the covenant and receives the people before Him.

From Mount Sinai into the midst of the people

After establishing the covenant, God calls Moses up the mountain again. The cloud covers the mountain, and the glory of God rests on it. Moses goes into the midst of the cloud and stays on the mountain for forty days. The words about the tabernacle that begin in Exodus chapter 25 are given following this meeting.

If we follow this flow, the command to make the tabernacle sounds new. The tabernacle is the sanctuary God had the people make in order to dwell among the people with whom He had established the covenant. The people had to hear the word of God and make the tabernacle and its furnishings according to the pattern He had shown them. The detailed commands about the materials and measurements are also set within this relationship of living together with God.

The holiness learned at Mount Sinai continues in the tabernacle as well. In the tabernacle there are set boundaries and an order of service. At the same time, God promises that He will meet and speak with them there. We now come to learn in more detail, through the structure and the sacrifices of the tabernacle, the way in which the holy God is with a sinful people.

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Preparing to read the tabernacle does not end with memorizing all the names of the materials. We need a heart that trusts the God who keeps His promises, remembers the grace by which He has saved us, and honestly examines what we are like before the word. When we read with that heart, even unfamiliar furnishings and ordinances come to us as a matter of the faith by which we draw near to God.

Here, too, is God's purpose in making us a holy people. A person who has come to know his own sins and has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit now also preaches that salvation to other sinners. The reason we can serve even while seeing our own weakness is not that we are perfect but that the Lord's salvation is perfect. A life of serving other souls by relying on the grace we have received from God lies before us.

In the next chapter we will look at the whole appearance of the tabernacle. How are the court, the holy place, and the Most Holy Place divided, and where are the furnishings placed? Following the explanation of the Bible, we will look one by one at that place which God, who spoke at Mount Sinai, had the people prepare in their midst.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do the law and the ordinances of the sacrifices that God gave each deal with the problem of sin? What is the difference between our own efforts and the salvation of Christ?

The people of Israel stand at Mount Sinai

2. When we read the circumcision of the covenant in connection with the baptism of Jesus and the Cross, what does it mean to receive spiritual circumcision?

3. When we discover our wrongs after receiving the remission of sins, how can we both admit those wrongs and keep believing in the salvation that has already been completed? ✉

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Chapter 3

Seeing the tabernacle at a glance

Read Together Exodus 25:10–40; 30:1–21 · Leviticus 16:1–17 · Hebrews 9:1–14; 10:19–22

< Exodus 26:33–35 >

"And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side."

< Exodus 40:1–8 >

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the

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tent of meeting. And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate."

Let us first picture the whole in our minds

When we go to an unfamiliar place, it helps to look at the whole map first. Before memorizing the street names one by one, if we know where the entrance is and in which direction the destination lies, we can find our way much more easily. It is the same when we read about the tabernacle. Before examining the materials and measurements in detail, if we know the broad divisions of the space and the positions of the furnishings, the long commands for its construction gradually come into view.

In the previous chapter we read the scene in which Israel makes a covenant with God at Mount Sinai. God commanded them to make a sanctuary in which He would dwell among the people. Now it is time to look at what that sanctuary looks like. In this chapter we will distinguish the court, the holy place, and the Most Holy Place, and learn the names and basic uses of the furnishings placed in each space.

Exodus chapter 25 explains the ark of the Testimony first. Then come the table and the lampstand, followed by the commands about the tent, the altar, and the court. To help those reading for the first time, this book will give its explanation from the outer court to the inner spaces. If we remember that the order recorded in the Bible differs from the order of explanation in this book, we can avoid confusion when we look up and read the passages.

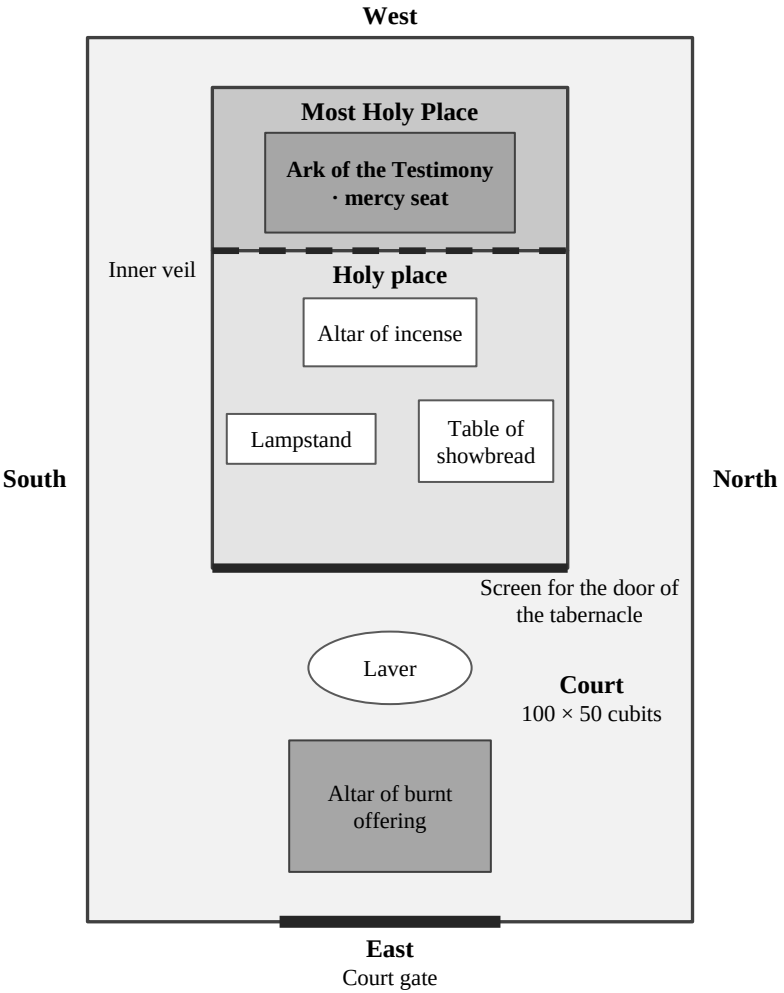
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The scope of the word “tabernacle” must also be examined according to the context. When the tabernacle as a whole is being explained, it can refer to the court and the facilities within it together. When the structure is being distinguished, it can also mean the main tent covered with the coverings. In this chapter we will call the outer space “the court,” the front space under the coverings “the holy place,” and the inner space “the Most Holy Place.” If we learn only the positions of these three names, we are ready to follow the explanation of the tabernacle.

Seeing the tabernacle at a glance

Seeing the tabernacle at a glance

A conceptual diagram of positions combining Exodus 26–27 · 30:1–21 · 40:1–8, 20–33



※ The scale, the shapes of the furnishings, and the exact spacing are not reproduced. The thick solid and dashed lines distinguish the curtains of the three boundaries.
※ This picture is for understanding the space.

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The top of the picture is north, and the east entrance is on the right. If we read the picture in the direction of looking inward, the altar of burnt offering and the laver in the court and the main tent of the tabernacle come into view in order. The sizes and spacing in the picture have been adjusted for the sake of explanation. It is not a picture that reproduces the actual shape of the furnishings or the routes by which everyone went in and out.

The gate on the east and the court surrounding the tabernacle

The court of the tabernacle is surrounded by hangings made of fine woven linen. Here the hangings are not a material laid on the ground but cloth hung around the perimeter. Pillars and sockets support these hangings, and pegs and the like are used to fix the facilities in place. The holy space God has established is set apart from the living space around it.

The length of the court is 100 cubits and its width is 50 cubits, and the height of the hangings is 5 cubits. The cubit is an ancient unit based on the length from the elbow to the fingertips. When converting it into today's meters, the basis of conversion must be stated. If, to help understanding, we take 1 cubit as 45 centimeters in this book, the court comes to about 45 meters in length and about 22.5 meters in width. These figures are examples based on a fixed conversion assumption.

The entrance of the court is on the east. The width of the screen that forms the gate is 20 cubits. On the above basis of conversion, this corresponds to about 9 meters. That screen is woven with embroidery of blue thread, purple thread, scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. The passage tells us the materials,

the length, and the pillars of the gate, but does not fix the proportion each colored thread occupies.

Looking at this gate makes us think of the salvation by which we draw near to God through Jesus Christ. We will explain the blue thread in connection with the baptism Jesus received from John, the purple thread with His divinity and kingship, and the scarlet thread with the blood of the Cross. We will look at that meaning in detail in Chapter 5. If we hold on to the meaning of these three threads together, we can see the salvation in which God came in the flesh of a man, bore and took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment of sin on the Cross. Through the fine woven linen we think of the word of God, who fulfilled the word of prophecy that promised this salvation. We do not make another way by our own merit, but go forward believing in this salvation God has prepared. When you remember the east gate of the court, keep in your heart as well the content of the faith learned through that gate.

Item	Measurements recorded in the Bible	Example taking 1 cubit as 0.45 meters
Court	100 cubits long × 50 cubits wide	About 45 × 22.5 meters
Court hangings	5 cubits high	About 2.25 meters
Court gate	20 cubits wide	About 9 meters

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The altar of burnt offering and the laver in the court

The furnishing to learn first within the court is the altar of burnt offering. The altar of burnt offering is made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze, and it has horns on its four corners. It is square, 5 cubits in both length and width, and 3 cubits high. On this altar the sacrifices are offered. We will learn the detailed procedures for each kind of sacrifice later, but we must first keep in our hearts the fact that in the tabernacle there is a place where the sacrificial offerings are offered.

As we look at the altar of burnt offering, we will learn together the judgment of sin and the sacrifice of Christ. Here appears the sacrifice that receives, in place of the sinful person, the judgment that person needs. If we read the laying on of hands on the sacrifice and its death in connection with the baptism of Jesus and the Cross, we learn that our sins were passed on to Jesus and that the Lord also bore the judgment of those sins. What we must hold on to before the altar of burnt offering is not a heart that lingers in a vague fear of sin, but a heart that believes in the Savior, who received that judgment in our place.

Between the altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle of meeting, the laver is placed. The laver is a furnishing that holds water for washing, and it is made of bronze together with its base. Aaron and his sons must wash their hands and feet with that water when they go into the tabernacle of meeting or minister at the altar. The position and use of the laver appear clearly in Exodus chapters 30 and 40.

The height and diameter of the laver and the amount of water are not given in the Bible. Therefore the size of the round

laver or the shape of its base in a picture of the tabernacle may be a part supplied by the person who drew the picture. While receiving help from pictures, we must also remember the range of what the Bible actually tells us.

If we connect the washing at the laver with the baptism of Jesus, we come to learn the assurance of the washing away of sins. Even a person who has received the remission of sins discovers his own wrongs as he lives. Each time, he washes his heart, believing that Jesus has already borne even that sin, and serves God again. This is not a matter of accomplishing a new atonement every day. It is confirming the completed salvation by faith and not giving up serving because of weakness. Remember the sacrifice of the altar of burnt offering and the washing of the laver together while distinguishing them. We will continue the detailed explanation in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.

The tent set up under the coverings

Now let us look at the main tent within the court. The tent is not a facility with only cloth hung around it. Boards made of acacia wood are set up, the structure is formed with sockets and bars, and the curtains and coverings are placed over it. “Curtains” is the term in the Bible text for the cloth that covers the tent. The boards are overlaid with gold. Twenty boards are set up on the south, twenty on the north, and eight on the west including the corner parts.

The length of one board is 10 cubits and its width is 1.5 cubits. These are set up to form the walls of the tent. In the reconstruction drawings we commonly see, the main tent is shown as 30 cubits long, 10 cubits wide, and 10 cubits high.

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However, these overall measurements are not written in one verse like a finished blueprint. It is a form reconstructed by reading together the explanations of the boards, the coverings, and the corners.

The materials that cover the tent are also in several layers. On the inside there are the curtains with cherubim skillfully woven into them, and above them is placed the tent made of goats' hair. The Bible text records the leather coverings above that as *"ram skins dyed red"* and *"badger skins"* (Exodus 26:14). The name of the outer skin is also rendered differently depending on the translation. We will explain the matter of these materials in more detail when we deal with the coverings.

Once we know the structure of the tent, the repeated explanations about the boards and sockets, the rings and bars become less unfamiliar. Each of the parts is used to form together the sanctuary God commanded. The tabernacle had to be set up according to the *"pattern"* (Exodus 26:30) that God had shown. The pattern refers to the shape and method God showed.

Here it helps to distinguish three screens. The first is the gate at the outer entrance of the court, the second is the entrance screen leading into the main tent, and the third is the inner veil that divides the holy place from the Most Holy Place. These three boundaries can also be explained as "three doors." All of them are boundaries made of cloth, but their positions and the number of their pillars differ, and cherubim are woven into the inner veil. Let us first confirm their positions so that we do not remember them mixed up under the same name.

The three furnishings placed in the holy place

In the holy place, the front space of the main tent, there are the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar of incense. If we think of standing facing west toward the inside of the holy place, the table is on the right, the north side, and the lampstand is on the left, the south side. If we learn them together with the four directions, we can understand the positions even when the orientation of a picture changes.

The table of showbread is the furnishing on which the bread is placed before God. It is made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Exodus chapter 25 commands that the bread be placed before God always, and Leviticus chapter 24 tells us in more detail the ordinance of setting out the twelve loaves. The furnishing this book calls "the table of showbread" is this very table.

The Bible text calls the furnishing that holds the lamps the *"lampstand"* and records that it is to be made of *"pure gold"* (Exodus 25:31). The lampstand can be understood as meaning the stand on which the lamps are placed. On it are placed seven lamps. Some may have learned it by the name "candlestick," but to understand its actual use we must think of lamps that use oil. In Exodus, the oil to be used for the lamps and the service of the priests who tend them are recorded together. Keeping the light burning involves continual service.

The altar of incense is placed before the veil that screens the Most Holy Place. This altar, too, is made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, but it differs from the altar of burnt offering in the court in size and use. On the altar of burnt offering the sacrifices are offered, and on the altar of incense the appointed incense is burned. Exodus chapter 30 commands that no burnt offering or grain offering be offered on the altar

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of incense. If we distinguish the two altars, we can reduce confusion when reading the ordinances of the sacrifices.

As we look at the furnishings of the holy place, we will also think of the life that takes the word as its food, the church, and the prayer that asks God for grace. The saints who have received the remission of sins keep hearing the word and gain the food of faith, make the gospel shine through the help of the Holy Spirit within the church that believes the same gospel, and ask God for the grace they need. The salvation learned in the court leads, in the holy place, to a life of fellowship with God and of serving Him. Through these three furnishings, let us remember the fact that even after God saved us, He feeds us with the word and makes us work together with Him. In the chapters that deal with each furnishing, we will look in detail at its meaning and the word that supports it.

The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat inside the veil

Inside the holy place there is the veil that divides the two spaces. Beyond that veil is the Most Holy Place. In the Most Holy Place the ark of the Testimony is placed, and on the ark is the mercy seat. The box-shaped furnishing seen at the innermost part of a picture of the tabernacle is the ark of the Testimony.

The ark of the Testimony is made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold inside and out. Its length is 2.5 cubits, and its width and height are each 1.5 cubits. God commands that the Testimony He will give be placed inside it. Exodus chapter 40 records Moses putting the Testimony into the ark. We can see that this ark is connected with the word of the covenant.

The mercy seat is the cover of pure gold placed on the ark. Its length and width are fixed at 2.5 cubits and 1.5 cubits respectively, to match the top of the ark. At its two ends two cherubim are made, and their wings are made to cover the mercy seat. The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat are related to each other, but they are not two names for the same object. It would be good to remember the ark and the cover on it as distinct.

God says that He will meet Moses there and speak from between the two cherubim above the mercy seat. The meaning of calling the mercy seat "the throne of grace," that is, the place where He bestows grace, can also be considered in light of this meeting. In Leviticus chapter 16 we read the ordinance of the Day of Atonement, in which blood is sprinkled on the mercy seat and before it.

In this way, in the words explaining the Most Holy Place, the Testimony of the covenant, the meeting in which God speaks, and the ordinance of atonement lie together. It is the innermost and smallest space, but it is the place where we meet the important question of the whole book. How a sinful people can draw near before the holy God is what we will keep learning through these furnishings and ordinances.

Holiness and grace learned from the division of the spaces

Looking at the layout, anyone may feel as if he could walk in from the gate of the court all the way to the Most Holy Place. But in the service of that time there were distinctions of access. The service of the holy place was entrusted to the priests, and in the Most Holy Place the high priest served according to the

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appointed ordinance of the Day of Atonement. Even the high priest could not enter at any time as he pleased.

Therefore we must not think that the order in which we study the tabernacle from the outside inward is the same as the actual routes of all the people at that time. We must first understand the order of service the Bible has set, and read the need for the remission of sins that is revealed through that order. If we apply it in a way that divides today's saints by space according to their office or the amount of their labor, this meaning becomes blurred.

The purpose of examining the spaces of the tabernacle is to learn the faith by which we receive the remission of sins and live together with God. Even when we connect the structure of the tabernacle to the salvation of Christ, we will read the ordinances of the actual space and the application to today's faith as distinct from each other. The central distinction in that application is whether one has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Being accustomed to religious life does not make the sin of the heart disappear by itself. A person who believes that all sins have been remitted through the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross becomes a child of God and can have fellowship with Him and serve Him. As we examine the inside and the outside of the tabernacle, we must also confirm our own faith before this word.

At this point, building a sanctuary in the heart is not a matter of gathering many good thoughts and trying to become holy by oneself. Just as the tabernacle was made according to the pattern God showed, it is to accept by faith the work in which Jesus received baptism from John and bore the sin of the world, and shed His blood on the Cross and saved sinners from sin. If even one of the two, the baptism of Jesus and the Cross,

is left out, one cannot receive complete salvation. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins by believing that word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and people of the same faith are built up together as the Church of God.

Now, is the overall picture of the tabernacle becoming a little clearer to you? In the court there are the altar of burnt offering and the laver; in the holy place there are the table, the lampstand, and the altar of incense; and in the Most Holy Place there are the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat. Read the passages ahead while remembering these positions. The names that were unfamiliar will become connected to one another within the place God prepared in order to be with His people.

In the next chapter we will look at the materials needed to set up this tabernacle and the offerings the people gave. What materials did God appoint, and with what heart did the people take part? We will take one more step forward, into the process in which the space we have looked at is actually set up.

Questions for Reflection

1. Without looking at the picture, name the furnishings in the court, the holy place, and the Most Holy Place. Which furnishings are still confusing to you in name or position?

2. How do the altar of burnt offering in the court and the altar of incense in the holy place differ? Where is each of the three screens?

3. Think about the distinctions of access to the tabernacle together with Hebrews 10:19–22. What does the faith that

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receives the remission of sins and has fellowship with God rely on? What do the altar of burnt offering and the laver teach about that faith? ✉

Chapter 4

The materials God appointed and the offerings of joy

Read Together Exodus 26:1–37; 27:1–21; 28:6–29; 30:22–38; 36:2–7 · Matthew 3:13–17 · Hebrews 10:1–14 · 2 Corinthians 8:9–15 · Leviticus 4:27–31; 16:21–22 · John 1:29

< Exodus 25:1–9 >

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."

< Exodus 35:29 >

"The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring material for all kinds of work which the LORD, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done."

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Before the list of materials we hear the will of God

In the previous chapter we looked at the whole appearance of the tabernacle. Now that we have learned about the court, the holy place, and the Most Holy Place, and the furnishings placed inside and outside them, let us turn our eyes to the materials that make up that place. Next to gold and silver there is goats' hair, and next to precious stones there are wood and oil. How did such different things come to be used together in the work of setting up the sanctuary of God?

Exodus chapter 25 begins with the scene in which God tells Moses to receive an offering. After telling him the materials to be received, God has them make a sanctuary in which He will dwell among the people. Therefore the list of materials must be read within His purpose in setting up the tabernacle. God did not leave His sinful people far away, but intended to have them receive the remission of sins and to dwell among them. The materials and the sacrifices He appointed contain that will of salvation. What we are to examine is not only the question of what and how much they gave. We must learn together how to believe in the salvation shown in those materials, and what to live for with the grace we have received.

In this word, what God has appointed and the willing heart of the people appear together. While commanding that the tabernacle be made, God says that the offering is to be received from those who give willingly with their hearts (Exodus 25:2). What is to be made must follow the word of God, and those who give it must respond with their own hearts. He teaches together the content of obedience and the attitude of giving.

The story of the tabernacle was given to the people God had already led out of Egypt. But coming out of Egypt did not mean that the flesh of the people had been changed into a body

that does not sin. The law God gave is right, but the people could not keep that word completely. God prepared the way of the sacrifice by which those sins would be remitted, and had them set up the tabernacle in order to be with them. It is not that the value of the offering removes their sins, but that by the grace of salvation that God has appointed, they draw near before the holy God. We too must first know and believe that grace before we can give with joy.

The sanctuary made according to the pattern He showed

God did not speak only of the materials and leave the rest to Moses' judgment. In Exodus 25:9 He says to make it according to the pattern of the tabernacle and of its furnishings. The pattern means the shape God shows and the way of making it. This charge is repeated in the later commands for its construction as well. The people had to hear what God wanted and work according to that word.

When building a house, one must know the shape and the use intended in order to prepare suitable materials. In the tabernacle, too, the materials and their uses are connected. Some support the boards, some are used to weave the veil, and some overlay the furnishings or keep the lamps burning. From gathering the materials to the service of the completed tabernacle, the word of God leads the way.

This order does not take away the place for human wisdom and labor. Exodus 35:10 calls for those who have skill and wisdom to come and make what God has commanded. The hands that follow the word needed care. Those who spun

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thread and wove cloth and handled wood and metal had to do the work entrusted to them with devotion.

The word that God appointed the materials and the pattern also gives a clear standard to our faith. I cannot change the salvation God has given according to my own thoughts and believe it that way. Just as the appointed materials could not be replaced with something else no matter how much devotion was put in, religious zeal cannot take the place of the salvation God has accomplished. We must know and believe according to the word that Jesus bore the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of that sin. The faith God receives is not human feeling but the faith that believes His word.

The work of preaching the gospel must also follow this standard. If we pick out and preach only what the hearers will like, or speak only of the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, we cannot fully preach the will of salvation God has shown. We must first believe in the salvation the Lord has given, and preach it to others just as we have received it. The word that God had the tabernacle set up with the materials He appointed makes us look back together on our hearts, which have been saved, and on the content of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach.

The place of gold, silver, bronze, and acacia wood

Gold is used in many furnishings inside the tabernacle. The ark of the Testimony and the table of showbread are made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. For the mercy seat and the lampstand, pure gold is used. The altar of incense is also made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. If we distinguish the

explanation that something was made of gold from the explanation that gold was overlaid on wood, we can understand the actual appearance of the furnishings more accurately.

Silver is used for the sockets under the boards of the tabernacle and for the sockets of the pillars of the veil that divides the holy place from the Most Holy Place. Silver is also used for the hooks and bands of the pillars of the court. Bronze is used to overlay the altar of burnt offering, and it is used for the utensils of the altar, the laver, the sockets of the pillars of the court, the pegs, and so on. Under the pillars at the entrance of the holy place, sockets of bronze are placed. Not all sockets were made of the same metal.

Acacia wood is used in many places, such as the boards and bars, the ark and the table, the altar and the carrying poles. When we look at a furnishing overlaid with metal, it is easy to remember only the gold and bronze that show on the outside, but inside there is wood shaped according to the word.

If we read this list only by comparing the value of the materials, we miss their uses. Gold is needed, the silver and bronze that make the sockets are needed, and the wood that forms the furnishings is needed as well. Each material is used to form the tabernacle in the place God appointed. When we know its use, even the unfamiliar names of materials gradually become familiar.

Gold shows the faith that believes the word of God. The preciousness of faith does not depend on how strong a will I have. It is precious because it believes the word of God, the unchanging truth, and Jesus Christ, who saved us from the sin of the world according to that word. Before God we must offer the faith that believes in the work of salvation He has accomplished.

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From the silver used in the tabernacle we learn the grace of salvation that God has given freely. It is not because our conduct is perfect that we can be with God. It is because Jesus bore all sins and made us the children of God. As you look at the silver used in the tabernacle, remember that it is His grace that makes you stand before God. Each time a fault is exposed, rather than struggling to hold yourself up, you must look back on what salvation the Lord, who bore even that fault, has given.

Bronze shows the judgment of sin. Because we cannot keep the law completely, we were people under the judgment of sin. God did not pretend not to know our sins, nor did He leave us to be judged for those sins. Jesus had all the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of sin on the Cross in our place. The remission of sins is not the result of a judgment received vaguely, but the grace by which the Lord fully received that judgment in our place. The faith of gold, the grace of silver, and the judgment of bronze in this way teach one salvation.

Through the acacia wood we look back on ourselves, who commit sin and show our weakness. When we examine ourselves, we have no righteousness to boast of before God. But God does not cast us off as we are; He saves us and makes us serve His work. Do not stop at memorizing the names of the materials, but believe how the Lord, by grace, established you, who were a sinner to be judged. That is the foundation of faith to be built up as we examine the materials of the tabernacle.

The tent prepared with thread, hair, and skins

The tabernacle needed not only metal and wood but also cloth and coverings. Blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine

woven linen are used to make the inner curtains and the veil of the tabernacle, and the screens at the entrance of the holy place and at the gate of the court. The curtains are the cloth that forms the tent by joining several widths together. These threads are also used for the ephod and the breastplate of the priest.

From goats' hair the cloth that covers the top of the tabernacle is made. The Bible text calls the materials of the coverings above it *"ram skins dyed red"* and *"badger skins"* (Exodus 26:14). From ram skins the covering of the tent is made, and with badger skins it is covered over.

Goats' hair and skins also need to be distinguished. Exodus chapter 35 shows the women spinning goats' hair into thread. The cloth made of hair and the leather coverings are not the same material. If we read calmly one word at a time, we can think of the several layers that form the tent and the different labors that went into them.

In these materials the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished is revealed. The blue thread shows the baptism Jesus received from John, the purple thread shows that He is God and King, and the scarlet thread shows the blood of the Cross, by which He received the judgment of sin in our place. The fine woven linen teaches the detailed word of God, promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. Salvation is not something made by adding our own thoughts. It is believing, just as the word says, the work of salvation that the Son of God accomplished by coming to this earth in the incarnation, through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. We will learn the meaning of each colored thread in more detail in the next chapter.

When you read of the goats' hair and the ram skins dyed red, think of the sacrifice made in our place. The meaning of the sacrifice, in which a sinless offering bears the sin and dies

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so that the sinner may live, was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. As we look at the skins that cover the outside, we remember the grace by which the Lord of glory came down in lowliness and saved us even while being despised by people. The coverings are more than mere materials that keep out the wind and rain; they make us look at the Savior, who gave Himself for sinners. We will continue to look at their detailed meaning in the chapter that deals with the coverings.

The Bible records not only the people who brought these materials but also those who spun the thread with their own hands. Their possessions and time were used together in the work of setting up the tent that shows the salvation God appointed. The labor we offer today is also precious when it is used so that people may hear and believe the salvation of Christ. Even in labor that is not very noticeable, we can take part with joy if it is needed for the gospel of the water and the Spirit to be preached.

The oil for the lamps and the spices, and the stones that bear the names of the people

In the list of materials there are also oil for the light and spices. He has them prepare even for the service that will be carried out there after the tabernacle is set up. The oil for the light is the oil that keeps the lamps burning. Exodus 27:20 has them bring *"pure oil of pressed olives"* for the light. The beautifully made lampstand also needed oil to actually keep the light burning.

The anointing oil is the oil applied when the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priests are set apart for holy duties. It is made by mixing spices, and it is distinguished from the incense

used for burning. Exodus chapter 30 tells us the materials and use of each. Just because oil and spices are in the same list does not mean that they are all put in the lamps or used for the same purpose.

As we look at the oil for the light and the spices, we think together of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in those who have been saved, and of the life that gives off the fragrance of Christ. The person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells is the person who has received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Since God lets others also hear that gospel through us, who have been saved from sin, our lives and our service are used to preach Christ. Just as we distinguish the actual uses of the oil and the spices, we must not confuse the work of the Holy Spirit with mere hot emotion or human zeal. Let us set our hearts on the word of salvation and offer our faith to the Lord.

The onyx stones and the precious stones are used for the garments of the priest. The ephod is a garment the priest wears, and the breastplate is the part attached at the chest. On the two shoulder straps of the ephod, that is, the parts that go over the shoulders, two onyx stones engraved with the names of the sons of Israel, divided between them, are attached. On the breastplate are set twelve stones engraved with the names of the twelve tribes. The two stones on the shoulders and the twelve stones on the chest differ in position and number.

On the stones Aaron bore were engraved the names of the people of Israel. Through this we learn the salvation in which Jesus, the High Priest of heaven, embraced us. Jesus bore the sins not of one nation only but of all the nations of the world, and by offering His own body He made them draw near before God. Rather than the splendor of the stones, look at the heart of the Savior, who regarded us as so precious. He made us, who

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were sinners, His precious children who have received the remission of sins. We too must embrace in our hearts those who have not yet received the remission of sins, and pray and serve the gospel so that they may believe in this salvation. We will learn this meaning in more detail when we deal with the garments of the priest.

A willing heart moves the hands of many people

The command concerning the offering given in Exodus chapter 25 leads to the response of the people in chapter 35. Moses tells the whole congregation what God has commanded. The people withdraw from before him, and then those whose hearts are stirred and who are willing to give return with their offerings. The work that began where the word was heard led on to the possessions and the labor of the hands of each person.

Men and women bring ornaments of gold. Those who have thread and fine linen, hair and skins bring them, and there are also those who give silver and bronze. Those who have acacia wood bring the wood. The rulers, that is, the leaders of the people, bring precious stones, spices, and oil. The Bible does not explain that all of them had to give the same things in the same amount. Many people take part together with what they have.

The sight of the women spinning thread with their hands makes this scene even more vivid. They did not merely hand over materials but added their own skill so that the materials could be used. A giving heart moves one’s possessions, and wisdom moves one’s hands. The labor of many people comes together for the one work God commanded.

A willing heart comes from knowing the grace of salvation. Think about what the things you give are used for. If a place to hear the gospel is prepared, if the work of preaching the word of the Lord continues, and if a person who did not yet know the remission of sins hears and believes that salvation, how thankful a thing that is! Just as we heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit through the labor of those who believed before us, our labor too is used to preach the gospel to others. It is not that material things save souls, but that the Lord uses those material things in the preaching of the gospel. When we know this purpose, we can give even a small offering with joy.

God said to receive the offering of those who were willing. Therefore we must share together the grace of salvation and the need of the gospel, and let each person respond by faith. The size or outward appearance of a building cannot itself be the purpose of serving. The place where the church gathers and the things it needs also fulfill their purpose when they are used so that people hear the word, receive the remission of sins, and serve the gospel together. What moves our hearts is not the desire to be recognized by people but thankfulness toward the Lord, who saved us.

The faith built on the complete remission of sins

Let us engrave more clearly on our hearts the salvation the materials of the tabernacle teach. What God wants from us is not a vague resolve to live a good life. It is the faith that knows and believes how the Lord removed our sins. Even if we have given many offerings and served for a long time, without that foundation of faith the problem of the sin of the heart is not solved.

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In the sin offering of the Old Testament, the sinner laid his hand on the head of an offering without blemish and killed that offering. The priest applied its blood to the place God had appointed and carried out the duty of atonement (Leviticus 4:27–31). The offering takes the place of the death the sinner had to receive. Meanwhile, on the Day of Atonement, Aaron the high priest laid both his hands on the head of the live goat while confessing the sins of the people, and sent the goat that bore the sins of the people away into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:21–22). The procedures of the individual sin offering and of the Day of Atonement differ from each other, but they show the will of salvation by which God had sin passed on to the sacrificial offering, and to the Lord who received baptism from John, so that the sinner might receive the remission of sins.

To fulfill that will, Jesus was born on this earth in the incarnation. When He received baptism at the Jordan River from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins passed on to Jesus once and for all. Just as in the Old Testament a sinner passed his sins on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, Jesus bore the sin of the world on His own body through the baptism He received from John. This is why, in Matthew chapter 3, Jesus received baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness. That is also why John testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Jesus, bearing that sin, was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died. The sinless Lord suffered because He had the sin of the world, our sin, passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. Our sins passed on to Him, and He also received the judgment for those sins in our place. The Lord rose again from death and became our Savior. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. By believing in this salvation

that Jesus, who is God, accomplished Himself, we have received the remission of all our sins.

Therefore, by believing only in the blood of the Cross while leaving out the transfer of sin through the baptism He received from John, one cannot fully believe this truth of salvation. If someone, while saying that he believes in Jesus, still carries sin and tries to remove that sin by repeating prayers of repentance, he is one who has not built the foundation of his faith on the salvation the Lord has already accomplished. My tears and devotion, my offerings and service cannot take the place of the Lord's baptism and blood. Just as God had them give the materials He appointed as they were, we must believe in the salvation God has accomplished without adding to it or taking away from it.

Hebrews chapter 10 teaches that Christ sanctified us by offering His body once for all, and that by one offering He has perfected forever those who have been sanctified (Hebrews 10:10–14). The sins the Lord removed do not contain only our past sins. He bore all the sins we commit throughout our lives and received their judgment. The person who believes this gospel is not a sinner still waiting for the remission of sins, but a righteous person who has received the remission of all sins and stands before God. That assurance does not come from speaking highly of oneself. We confess that we have no sin because we believe the word, just as it is, that the Lord has completely removed sin.

In our flesh there is still weakness. Even when wrong thoughts and actions are exposed, we must not hide them or insist that they are right. But neither must we deny, because of that weakness, the remission of sins the Lord has accomplished. While admitting your wrongs, believe in the Lord, who bore even that sin, and draw near before God with the heart of a

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righteous person who has been saved. We do not give offerings in order to obtain the remission of sins anew; we serve with thanksgiving because we have received full remission of our sins. This faith frees us from hypocrisy and enables even us, who are lacking, to serve the gospel with bright hearts.

A life of preaching the salvation we have received and giving with joy

In Exodus chapter 36 there appears the scene in which the offerings become sufficient. The workers inform Moses that what the people are bringing is more than the amount needed. When Moses tells them to make no more offerings for the sanctuary, the people stop bringing them. The offerings were gathered for the work God had entrusted, and when the materials for doing that work had become plentiful, the gathering also stopped.

We too must know clearly what we give for. The fact that we have gathered more is not in itself the basis of joy. The basis of joy is the fact that the Lord has saved us and uses our offerings and labor to preach the gospel to those who do not yet know that salvation. Looking together at what is needed and using it in keeping with that purpose must also be done within the faith that serves the gospel.

Paul, while urging sharing for saints in need, explains, *"If there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has"* (2 Corinthians 8:12). He also says that it is not his intention to make others comfortable while burdening those who give. The offering for the tabernacle and the collection to help the saints differ in their circumstances, but we can

meditate on them together in that both respond to the grace received and take part willingly within their own means.

Now let us think about how to serve the gospel with what we have. We can give the material things needed for preaching the word, invite people who will hear the gospel, and pray for family and neighbors who have not yet received the remission of sins. The hands that prepare the meetings and take on the necessary tasks and labor are also precious. Though the tasks we each take on differ, the purpose of serving together with the church so that people may hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the same. The work God uses is not accomplished by the ability of a few people alone. When those who know the grace of salvation join together in the same faith, the labor of each person is used to preach the gospel.

In us, who have received the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit dwells. When we do not pursue only the desires of the flesh but live for the gospel, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and makes us delight in the work of the Lord. Do not give up while looking only at your shortcomings, but believe in the salvation the Lord has accomplished and take part in the work entrusted to you. The life of embracing in our hearts those who do not yet know the remission of sins and preaching this gospel to them is the precious life given to us who have been saved. Because the Lord has established us as righteous people and made us His workers, we can serve with thanksgiving.

The materials God appointed now make us look afresh at the foundation of our faith. We have learned the faith that believes the word, the free grace, and the judgment the Lord received in our place. The Lord has completely accomplished salvation. We believe in that salvation and receive the remission of sins, preach the gospel we have received just as it is, and give our offerings with joy. Let us establish clearly in

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our hearts the salvation God has given, and serve together so that others may also know that grace. In the next chapter we will look at the gate of the court made of blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen, and learn in more detail the salvation of Christ revealed in that gate.

Questions for Reflection

1. How does the word that God appointed the materials of the offering and the pattern of the tabernacle teach our faith? How are the faith shown by gold, the grace shown by silver, and the judgment shown by bronze connected within the salvation of Jesus Christ?

2. Why must the transfer of sin through the baptism of Jesus and the judgment of the Cross be believed together? Even when the weakness of the flesh is exposed, what is the basis on which we can stand before God as righteous people who have received the remission of sins?

3. How is the joy of giving willingly connected to the purpose of the gospel? For those who do not yet know the remission of sins, what can I do to serve together with the church with the material things, time, and skills I have? ✉

Chapter 5

The gate of the court woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread

Read Together Exodus 38:18–19 · John 1:1–3, 14, 29–34; 10:7–11 · Philippians 2:5–11 · Matthew 26:26–28

< Exodus 27:9–19 >

"You shall also make the court of the tabernacle. For the south side there shall be hangings for the court made of fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long for one side. And its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets shall be bronze. The hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be silver. Likewise along the length of the north side there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, with its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze, and the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver. And along the width of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits, with their ten pillars and their ten sockets. The width of the court on the east side shall be fifty cubits. The hangings on one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets. And on the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets. For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. It

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shall have four pillars and four sockets. All the pillars around the court shall have bands of silver; their hooks shall be of silver and their sockets of bronze. The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, made of fine woven linen, and its sockets of bronze. All the utensils of the tabernacle for all its service, all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, shall be of bronze."

< Matthew 3:13–17 >

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

< 1 John 5:6–8 >

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV"

Before the gate of the court that God had them prepare

In the previous chapter we looked at the materials God appointed and the offerings the people gave with joy. Now we intend to look closely at one place to see what was made with those materials. It is the gate on the east of the court of the tabernacle. What command for its construction is contained in this gate made of blue thread, purple thread, scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, and what work of Jesus can we learn through that gate?

A gate stands on the boundary that divides the inside from the outside. At the same time, it is also the place through which one crosses that boundary and goes in. The hangings surrounding the court of the tabernacle set apart a holy place, and God had a gate prepared on that boundary. As we read about this gate, we meet again the question we held in the previous chapters. How can a sinful person draw near to the holy God?

As we look at the gate of the tabernacle, let us read together the word that Jesus is the door of salvation. In John 10:7–11, Jesus speaks of Himself as the door of the sheep and teaches that whoever enters through Him will be saved. He then also speaks of the good shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep. To draw near to Jesus means to rely on the Savior, who gave Himself for us.

This parable in the Gospel of John has sheep and a shepherd as its setting. When we meditate on that word together with the gate of the court of the tabernacle, we come to think about whom the faith that draws near to God must be directed toward. The door that saves us is Jesus Christ. Before examining this meaning, we will read what kind of gate

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Exodus actually told them to make. Reading the words about the gate calmly becomes the first step in learning the meaning of salvation.

The embroidered screen hung on four pillars

Exodus 27:9–19 explains the hangings, pillars, sockets, and gate surrounding the court of the tabernacle. The length of the south and north sides is 100 cubits each, and the width of the west and east sides is 50 cubits each. On the east side, where the gate is, He had hangings of 15 cubits placed on each side, and for the gate of the court a screen 20 cubits long. The hangings on each side of the gate have three pillars and three sockets each, and the gate has four pillars and four sockets.

The screen spoken of in Exodus 27:16 refers to a cloth that is hung up. It is a different form from setting up a solid board as a door leaf. Fine woven linen can be understood as meaning a material made by twisting fine linen thread. When we explain the three colored threads, we must not forget the linen thread that was used together with them.

Exodus 27:18 records that the height of the hangings of fine woven linen surrounding the court was 5 cubits. Exodus 38:18, which tells of the actual construction, informs us that the length of the screen was 20 cubits and its width, that is, its height, was 5 cubits, the same as the hangings of the court. Here the screen means the cloth hung at the gate of the court. Chapter 27 tells of the command, and chapter 38 of the construction according to that command. When we read the two passages together, we can picture the gate more clearly.

He also had the hooks and bands of the pillars of the court made of silver, and the sockets of bronze. The pegs that fix the

court in place are also of bronze. The embroidered cloth and even the parts that support it lie within the regulations God appointed. The devotion and skill of the people were used in making the gate according to this word.

However, the area each colored thread occupies and the arrangement of the pattern are not recorded. A picture that divides the three colors into bands of the same width, or into four sections including the linen thread, is not a design the Bible itself presents. We learn the appearance of the gate according to the materials and measurements that are specified, but there is no need to make what is not recorded a basis of faith.

How to read the work of Christ in the colored threads

Let us learn the salvation of Christ by examining one by one the materials that make up the gate of the tabernacle. The blue thread points to the baptism Jesus received from John, the purple thread to the divinity and kingship of Jesus, and the scarlet thread to the blood He shed on the Cross. In the fine woven linen we read the word of God's prophecy and the salvation accomplished according to that word. Through the various materials we examine together who the Savior is and what He did and how.

Reading in the objects and institutions of the Old Testament a meaning that shows the work of Christ in advance in this way is called typological interpretation. The purpose of examining the colored threads is not to memorize the names of the colors. It is to know what Jesus did for sinners and to believe in Him. Through the materials that make up the gate of the court, we

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must engrave on our hearts the work of the Savior, who came for us.

Reading the commands for construction in Exodus and examining their meaning in the light of the work of Christ must be done together. Exodus commands that the gate be made of these materials, but does not directly interpret the meaning of each color. Therefore we will open together the words recorded in the New Testament about the baptism and the Cross of Jesus and about who He is, and examine the meaning of salvation that the colored threads point to.

Therefore, after reading the explanation that matches the colors with His work, we must open the Scriptures that record that work. When examining His baptism, we read Matthew chapter 3 together with it, and when examining who Christ is, John chapter 1 and the like. In this way we do not lose sight of the One toward whom the interpretation of the colored threads is directed. Our faith is directed not toward the colors of the cloth themselves but toward Jesus Christ, to whom the Bible testifies.

The blue thread and Jesus, who received baptism from John

In Matthew 3:13–17, Jesus comes from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. John tries to prevent Him, saying that he himself needs to be baptized by Jesus. Then Jesus speaks.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15).

The gate of the court woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread

When Jesus has been baptized and comes up from the water, the heavens are opened, and the Spirit of God descends like a dove and alights upon Him. From heaven a voice is heard saying that Jesus is the beloved Son and the One in whom God is well pleased. In this event the obedience of Jesus, the descent of the Spirit, and the testimony of the Father appear together. This is the reason we cannot read the baptism of Jesus as a scene that passes by for a moment in His work.

The central event the blue thread points to is the baptism Jesus received from John. When Jesus received baptism from John, who represented mankind, He had all the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all. That He had the sin of the world passed on to Him means that Jesus received the judgment of sin that sinners had to bear. If we read together the laying on of hands, in which hands were placed on the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament, and the testimony in John 1:29 about the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, we can follow this connection.

All the righteousness Jesus fulfilled is the right work of God, who saves sinners from sin. He did not simply cover sin over or treat it as though it had never happened. The sinless Jesus made us righteous by bearing the sins of sinners and even receiving the judgment for those sins. If we explain the reason Jesus received baptism from John only as His showing an example of humility, we miss how our sins were passed on to Him. The blue thread leads us before the fact of that transfer of sin.

In the sin of the world, your sins and mine are all included. The Lord bore the sin people have from birth and the sins they have committed as they have lived, the sins exposed today and even the sins they will commit as they go on living. It is not that He divided the sins of the past, present, and future so that

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the Lord took on some part and had us solve the rest. Jesus knows our whole lifetime and received all the sin of the world. When we believe in the work of the Savior, who had sin passed on to Him, we can be freed from the fear of whether some sin still remains unsolved.

Matthew chapter 3 records the word of Jesus, who intends to fulfill all righteousness, and the event of His baptism. The bearing of sin through baptism must be understood by reading together the laying on of hands in the Old Testament and the word about the Lamb who takes away sin, rather than being explained by one sentence of this chapter alone. It is also important to examine the different procedures of the laying on of hands in the Old Testament without merging them into one. We will examine the relationship between the laying on of hands and baptism in more detail in the next chapter and in the chapter dealing with the Day of Atonement.

Therefore the baptism of Jesus is not a secondary event to be noted in addition to salvation. If we leave out the fact that He bore sin through His baptism and believe only in the blood of the Cross, we cannot fully know why Jesus paid the wages of our sins. We must believe in the blue thread and the scarlet thread together. We must also distinguish the rite of baptism we have received from the baptism Jesus received from John. Our rite does not transfer the sin of the world. The One who bore sin is Jesus, and our faith is directed toward the baptism He received and the sacrifice He accomplished after it.

The purple thread is the work of the King, who was humbled for us

The purple thread points to Jesus being God and the King of kings. To say that He has divinity means that Jesus is truly the Creator, who created heaven and earth. Only when we know who the One who saved us is can we also know the weight of what He did. Through the purple thread we examine the identity of the One who accomplished the work of baptism and the Cross.

John 1:1–3 testifies that the Word, who was in the beginning, is God, and that all things were made through Him. Then verse 14 says that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The starting point in explaining Jesus is the amazing news that the One who made the world came among us. This very God came as a man in order to save sinners.

If we read Philippians 2:5–11 together with this, we can see His exaltation and His humbling as one flow. Christ is in the form of God, yet He took the form of a bondservant and humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death on the Cross. God exalted Him and makes every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord. This word shows together the authority of the Lord, who saved us, and the love with which He gave Himself.

Jesus, the King of kings, was humbled and gave Himself for sinners. The Creator, who made us, came as the Savior of sinners, received baptism from John, and was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died. He is the Savior who lacks nothing to make us sinless. We who believe in Him as Lord hear the word of His work, receive salvation, and live our lives as righteous people. In our daily lives we also engrave on our

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hearts the word in which Philippians, alongside the humbling of Christ, urges us to look out for one another.

The scarlet thread and the blood shed for sinners

The scarlet thread points to the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross. Jesus bore all the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment for that sin on the Cross. Therefore we must believe together in the baptism He received from John and His shedding of blood as one work of salvation. Here is the reason we examine the blue thread and the scarlet thread together.

In Matthew 26:26–28, Jesus, giving the bread and the cup to His disciples, speaks of His body and His blood. In particular, He tells them that His blood is the blood of the covenant shed for the remission of the sins of many. When we think of the meaning of the Cross, we praise the baptism Jesus received from John for sinners. In the remission of sins is contained the love with which He gave His life.

1 Corinthians 15:3–4 also says that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and was buried, and that He rose again from death on the third day according to the Scriptures. We, having examined the baptism and the Cross, can be victorious because we believe in the Savior, who rose again from death, and entrust the problem of sin and death to Him. The gospel of salvation we learn through the colored threads must lead to a faith that lives relying on Christ.

Through the scarlet thread let us look at the sacrifice of Christ, who gave Himself for us. Since the judgment of the sin passed on to Him through baptism was carried out on the Cross, the remission of sins is not something we complete by filling

up a remaining portion. We must also lay down the thought that since the Lord has done most of it, we only need to do a little better. The Lord paid the wages of sin in full and rose again from death. We receive by faith the complete salvation He accomplished.

When we realize our own sins, we must not try to wash away sin with the amount of our prayers and tears. Before the law we may realize our wrongs and be in anguish, but the wages of sin are not removed in proportion to our anguish. If, after a prayer of repentance, our hearts feel relieved for a while and then, when we do wrong again, we think that the remission of sins has disappeared as well, we place the basis of salvation in our own condition. The One who bore the judgment of sin is Jesus. What we are to rely on is His baptism and the blood of the Cross, and even when we pray, we must draw near to God believing in that salvation He has already accomplished.

The Holy Spirit, who testifies of Christ, who came by water and blood

1 John 5:6–8 records the testimony of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit like this.

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV"

The One who came by water and blood is Jesus Christ, and the One who bears witness is the Holy Spirit. The word that these three agree in one tells us that the testimony concerning Christ agrees as one. The words that follow explain that God

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has testified of His Son, and that eternal life is in that Son. The concern of this passage is in whom we believe and where we obtain life.

We read the water of this word in connection with the baptism Jesus received from John, and the blood in connection with His death on the Cross. Jesus, who is God, saved sinners through the baptism He received from John and the shedding of His blood on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit works together with those who believe the fact of that salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Reflect in your hearts on the baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, the remission of sins, and the presence of the Holy Spirit as one message of salvation.

1 John speaks of the Holy Spirit as the One who testifies concerning Jesus Christ. We must listen carefully to who the Savior is, of whom the Holy Spirit testifies, and to what He accomplished. If we read, distinguishing between the divinity of Jesus examined through the purple thread and the testimony of the Holy Spirit this passage tells of, we can understand more clearly Christ, who saved us, and the work of the Holy Spirit, who testifies of Him.

In the fine woven linen, too, let us think of the detailed word of God and the fulfillment of His promise. In Isaiah 7:14 there is the promise that a virgin will conceive and bear a Son and call His name Immanuel. Matthew 1:21–23, telling of the birth of Jesus, makes clear that this word was fulfilled. The One who would save His people from their sins came according to the promise. Believing in the birth and the salvation of Jesus is different from vaguely expecting that something good will happen. It is believing what God first spoke and then fulfilled according to that word.

Isaiah 1:18 says that sins like scarlet will become as white as snow. Reading that promise, we must examine how sin is

washed away. The meaning of the laying on of hands and the blood shown in the sacrifices of the Old Testament continues in the New Testament in the baptism and the Cross of Jesus. The Lord came according to the word, bore sin, and accomplished the remission of sins by receiving the judgment of that sin. The attention to detail we learn through the fine woven linen leads to a faith that confirms such promises and their fulfillment one by one.

The Holy Spirit testifies of the fact of this salvation. It is not that the Holy Spirit is with us only when we produce a special feeling. The Holy Spirit is with those who believe in Jesus, who came by water and blood, and have received the remission of sins. That is why, even after finishing the study of the tabernacle, we must open the Bible again. The study that began with recognizing the threads used in the gate must go on to knowing and believing the salvation God accomplished according to His word.

We draw near to God relying on Christ

What we must hold on to in our hearts as we examine the gate of the court is the assurance of the remission of sins. Jesus removed all sins through His baptism and the blood of the Cross. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit has received the remission of sins and become righteous before God. It is not a status obtained because the flesh has become perfect. It is that we have become righteous by faith because the Lord has saved us perfectly. Romans 8:1–2 says that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and that the law of the Spirit of life has set them free

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from the law of sin and death. We draw near to God relying on this salvation.

Before this word, let us look back on the basis of our faith. We should not ask only whether our hearts are at ease today or how deeply we were moved during worship. Even on a day when our feelings are calm, the salvation Jesus accomplished does not change. 1 John 5:11–13 says that eternal life is in the Son of God, and it was written so that those who believe in the Son may know and be assured of that life. Do not try to stir up your feelings in order to obtain salvation again, but believe in the Savior, who bore all of my sin and was judged.

Even the righteous who have received the remission of sins commit wrongs in their daily lives. The word “righteous” does not mean that we never sin again in the flesh, nor is it a permission that whatever we do is all right. The law God gave shows even those who have been saved the standard of right living and makes them realize their wrongs. Therefore, if we have come to know that our words and actions were wrong, we must honestly admit it and turn from it. While speaking of grace, we must not treat lightly the pain we have given to others.

At the same time, do not deny, because of that wrong, the remission of sins the Lord has accomplished. Admitting a wrong and trying to obtain a new atonement are different things. It is to realize our sin through the law, and to believe again that Jesus bore even that sin through His baptism and was judged on the Cross. With this faith we wash our hearts and draw near to God. When we engrave on our hearts the grace by which He has already remitted our sins, we can serve the Lord with holy hearts. We must hold on together to the assurance of salvation from sin and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There is no need to know all the truths of the tabernacle from the beginning. But we must not leave the faith that draws near to God to vague thoughts alone. Within the church of the Lord we must hear and learn the word and come to know more clearly how Jesus saved us from the sin of the world. Even when we hear the same gospel again, do not let it pass as a story we already know. Each time we see our own weakness, the word about the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross renews our faith. The saints who have been saved take this word as their food, pray to God, and serve the gospel together.

A person who has come to know the door of salvation must also make that truth known to neighbors who do not yet know this gospel. The purpose of learning the tabernacle does not end with memorizing the names and meanings of the materials. It goes on to preaching the news that Jesus is God and has remitted all our sins once and for all through the baptism He received from John and His blood. It is not that we labor in order to obtain the remission of sins, but that we serve the gospel with thanksgiving because we have received the remission of sins. Let us give the time and strength God has given us to this precious work.

Now it is time to turn our eyes from the gate of the court and look at the altar of burnt offering placed in the court. In the next chapter we will read, in the order of the Bible, what the person who brought the sacrifice and the priest each did. Carrying the question of the remission of sins we thought about at the gate of the court, we will learn in more detail the sacrifice God prepared.

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Questions for Reflection

1. What do Exodus 27:16 and 38:18–19 make clear about the materials, length, height, and pillars of the gate of the court? Distinguish between what the Bible makes clear and what you have imagined while looking at pictures.

2. Read Matthew 3:13–17 and 1 John 5:6–8. Why must we believe together the fact that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross? Also explain the promise and fulfillment learned from the fine woven linen.

3. What is the basis on which we can have the assurance of being righteous even on a day when we discover our own wrongs? Think together about a life of believing in the remission of sins already accomplished while admitting our wrongs and turning from them, and a life of learning the word and preaching the gospel within the church. ✉

The gate of the court woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread

Chapter 6

The altar of burnt offering and the sacrifice for sinners

Read Together Exodus 38:1–7 · Leviticus chapter 4; 16:15–22; 17:11 · Matthew 3:13–17; 11:7–14 · John 1:29 · Romans 6:23 · Hebrews 9:11–14; 10:1–22

< Exodus 27:1–8 >

"You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide—the altar shall be square—and its height shall be three cubits. You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay it with bronze. Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. You shall make a grate for it, a network of bronze; and on the network you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. You shall put it under the rim of the altar beneath, that the network may be midway up the altar. And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. The poles shall be put in the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar to bear it. You shall make it hollow with boards; as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall they make it."

< Leviticus 1:3–5 >

"If his oblation be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish: he shall offer it at the door

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of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before Jehovah –ASV. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

The place of sacrifice encountered inside the gate of the court

In the previous chapter we looked at the gate of the court made of blue thread, purple thread, scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. Now we will look at the altar of burnt offering placed within the court. This furnishing, which we meet after passing through the beautiful gate, makes us think again about what kind of place the tabernacle is. In the place where God was worshiped there were the death and blood of the sacrifice and the sacrifice offered by burning with fire. It becomes clear that in the matter of drawing near to God, sin and atonement cannot be passed over.

Exodus 27:1–8 tells us how to make the altar. How the sacrifices are offered we learn in more detail in Leviticus. Only when we read the commands for construction and the ordinances of the sacrifices together can we understand the shape and use of the altar. If we examine one by one what sacrifice was brought, who laid hands on it, and where the blood was sprinkled, even an unfamiliar scene of sacrifice gradually becomes clear.

Because of the name "altar of burnt offering," it is easy to think that only burnt offerings were offered here. But in

Leviticus there are also ordinances for burning the fat of the peace offering and the sin offering on this altar. The altar is the name of the furnishing, and the burnt offering and the sin offering are kinds of sacrifice. Though one altar was used for several sacrifices, that does not mean that the procedure to be kept for each sacrifice was also the same.

What we must first know before the altar of burnt offering is our own sin and God's judgment of that sin. When we hold ourselves up to the law, we come to know that not only outwardly exposed actions but even the hatred and greed of the heart are sin. We cannot escape the wages of sin by putting forward the points in which we are better than others. The wages of sin is death, and a sinner deserves to receive the judgment of God and the punishment of hell. The sacrifice that is sacrificed on the altar is offered for exactly such a sinner. Only when we understand the sacrifice that receives in our place the judgment we deserve can we understand how great the love revealed in Christ's salvation is.

The square altar of acacia wood overlaid with bronze

The altar of burnt offering is made of acacia wood and overlaid with bronze. Its length and width are 5 cubits each, and its height is 3 cubits. On its four corners horns are made that are of one piece with the altar. Here the horns do not mean that animal horns were cut off and attached, but refer to parts made to project at the corners of the altar. If we first remember the measurements the Bible tells us, it helps in understanding the altar, which looks different in each picture.

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If we take 1 cubit as 45 centimeters, as we did earlier, the length and width are about 2.25 meters, and the height is about 1.35 meters. This is an example of conversion for estimating the size. The Bible did not present these figures in meters. We can picture a furnishing higher and wider than the dining table we are familiar with, but we must distinguish the image we picture for comparison from the structure established by the text.

For the altar, pans to receive its ashes, shovels, basins and forks, and firepans were also needed. These utensils are made of bronze. The service of the altar involved not only placing the sacrifice on it but also handling the fire and clearing away the ashes. The service God entrusted was carried out through such concrete labor of the hands.

A grate and rings made of bronze, and carrying poles of acacia wood overlaid with bronze, also appear. The altar is made hollow with boards, and God has them follow the pattern He showed on the mountain. Even the equipment for carrying it is prepared according to the word. Remembering this structure recorded in the text, we will now look at what sacrifice is offered for sinners on that altar.

The roles of the person offering the burnt offering of the herd and of the priest

Leviticus 1:3–5 explains the case of offering a bull as a burnt offering. The person presenting the offering brings a male without blemish to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and offers it before God. Then he places his hand on the head of the offering. The Bible says that the offering is accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. “Accepted” means that

God gladly receives it. Notice that the person who brought the sacrifice takes part directly in this work. His worship does not end with watching the priest from a distance.

The laying on of hands is the act of placing one's hands on something. In this passage, the person presenting the offering lays his hand on the head of the sacrifice and kills that bull before God. Then the priests, the sons of Aaron, take the blood and sprinkle it all around on the altar, that is, on the four sides of the altar. The work of the person presenting the offering and the work of the priest are distinguished. If we read it as though one priest did the whole process from beginning to end, we miss the participation shown in the text.

In this burnt offering of the herd, the place where the blood is handled is all around the altar. We must not add here the ordinance of putting blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering. If we first bring in the procedure we will read later in the sin offering, different sacrifices get mixed together as if into one scene. When reading the ordinances of the sacrifices, it is better to follow first the explanation of the chapter and verses we are now reading rather than a familiar picture.

In verses 6–9 that follow, the offering is skinned and cut into its pieces, and the priests lay the cut pieces, the head, and the fat on the fire and the wood. The entrails and the lower parts of the legs are washed with water, and the priest burns them on the altar as an offering. Looking at the ordinance that the entrails are washed and offered, we cannot explain that every part considered unclean was thrown away. The way of offering to God is not decided by human guesswork.

The burnt offering is an offering accepted before God, and it is connected with atonement. See the judgment of sin in the scene where the sacrifice dies and is burned with fire. The one who committed the sin is the person himself, yet an offering

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without blemish is sacrificed for him. Therefore, seeing the death the sacrificial offering receives, a sinner comes to know the weight of his own sin and to believe in the grace of atonement God has prepared. If one thinks of sin lightly or thinks it can be covered by one's own good deeds, one cannot know why the baptism and the sacrifice of Jesus were needed.

When we know the differences among the sacrifices, atonement becomes clearer

The sin offering of Leviticus chapter 4 must be read as distinct from the burnt offering of the herd. When a ruler, that is, a leader of the people, offers a male goat, or one of the common people offers a female goat or a female lamb without blemish, the person presenting the offering lays his hand on its head and kills the sacrificial offering. The priest puts the blood on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pours the rest at the base of the altar. The part burned on the altar is also the fat specified in the text. It is not a repetition of the procedure of the burnt offering of the herd just as it is.

When the anointed priest or the whole congregation has sinned, the scope of handling the blood changes. On the bull the priest offers, he himself lays his hands, and on the offering of the congregation, the elders lay their hands. Some of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of meeting and sprinkled seven times before the veil, and put on the horns of the altar of incense inside the tabernacle of meeting. The rest of the blood is poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering in the court. Here the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering are different furnishings.

In this case the fat of the bull is burned on the altar of burnt offering, but the rest of its body is carried to a clean place outside the camp and burned there. Therefore we cannot say that the blood of every sin offering was put only on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, or that all the flesh was burned on the altar of burnt offering. We must also distinguish the sprinkling of blood before the veil in Leviticus chapter 4 from the procedure of sprinkling blood on the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place.

On the Day of Atonement in Leviticus chapter 16, there is a need to distinguish the two goats clearly. There is the goat that is killed and whose blood is brought inside the veil, and there is the goat that is sent alive into the wilderness. The scene in which Aaron lays both his hands on its head and confesses the sins of the people, putting them on its head, is the procedure performed on the live goat. We must not merge the scenes as if this goat died immediately and shed its blood.

If you keep the following distinctions in mind, reading the later chapters becomes easier.

Passage read	Record of the laying on of hands	Handling of the blood or the procedure that follows
Burnt offering of the herd, Leviticus 1:3–5	The person presenting the offering lays his hand on the head of the offering	The priests sprinkle the blood all around on the altar
Sin offering of a ruler or of the common people, Leviticus 4:22–35	The person presenting the offering lays his hand on it	It is put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and the rest is poured at the base of the altar

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Passage read	Record of the laying on of hands	Handling of the blood or the procedure that follows
Sin offering of the priest or of the congregation, Leviticus 4:3–21	The priest or the elders of the congregation lay their hands on it	It is sprinkled before the veil and put on the horns of the altar of incense, and the rest is poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering
The live goat of the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16:20–22	Aaron lays both his hands on it and confesses the sins	On the Day of Atonement one goat is to be sent away into the wilderness

For the burnt offering of birds, no command for the laying on of hands like that for the burnt offering of the herd is recorded, and the blood is drained out at the side of the altar. In the peace offering, the laying on of hands and the sprinkling of blood all around on the altar appear, and the blood of the trespass offering is also sprinkled all around on the altar.

The passing on of sin and the truth of salvation learned from the laying on of hands and baptism

Just as sins were passed on to the sacrifice of the Old Testament through the laying on of hands and that sacrifice was sacrificed, Jesus had the sin of mankind passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John. The Lord, who has no sin, bore the sin of the world, our sin, for sinners. Therefore, His death on the Cross means that the Savior, who bore our sins,

received the judgment for those sins in our place. He rose again from death and became our eternal Savior once and for all.

The baptism Jesus received from John is not a secondary event separate from the Cross. That baptism and the Cross, on which Jesus paid the price of the sin of the world once and for all, are connected as one work of salvation. Rather than relying on our own effort or religious emotion, we must know and believe what Jesus actually accomplished. The meaning contained in the colors of the threads we examined in the previous chapter also follows along with this flow of salvation.

Why did Jesus receive baptism from John? John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind, was entrusted with the work of passing the sin of the world on to Jesus. Jesus spoke of John as the greatest among those born of women, and John testified of the Savior, who was coming after him. *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:12–13).* It did not stop at one sinner laying his hands on his own sacrifice; through John, the representative of mankind, the sin of the world was passed on to the Lamb of God. Only when we know both the baptism of John and the sin Jesus bore does it become clear whose sin was judged on the Cross.

In Matthew 3:13–17, Jesus says to John, who tries to prevent Him from being baptized, that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness. The Lord is not One who came to this earth to bear a little of the sin of the world or to show religious humility. The Lord came to find us in order to save sinners from the sin of the world once and for all. He accomplished the work of the remission of sins by receiving baptism from John and bearing the sin of the world, and by going to the Cross bearing that sin and receiving the judgment. The word that He fulfills all

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righteousness contains in this way the will of salvation that makes sinners righteous.

Do not memorize the laying on of hands, baptism, and the shedding of blood separately, but read them as the flow in which sin is passed on and the judgment of that sin is carried out. If we examine together the laying on of hands and atonement in Leviticus 1:4, the word in 16:21 about putting sins on the head of the goat, and the baptism in Matthew chapter 3, we learn that the promise of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ. While keeping distinct the procedures of each sacrifice as we distinguished them above, believe in the perfect Savior whom all those sacrifices point us to. If we leave out the bearing of sin through baptism and speak only of the blood of the Cross, we miss the important explanation of how our sins were passed on to the Lord.

From the repeated sacrifices to the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ

When we think of the blood of the sacrificial offering, we must not miss the fact that the Son of God paid the price of our sins and gave that blood. Leviticus 17:11 explains that the life is in the blood, and that God has given the blood to make atonement on the altar. God has prepared the way for dealing with sin. If a person who believes in Jesus understands the baptism Jesus received from John according to his own thoughts, he misses the grace of salvation.

John 1:29 introduces Jesus as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* Hebrews 9:11–14 explains that Christ accomplished eternal atonement not with the blood of animals but with His own blood, and that His blood cleanses

our conscience so that we may serve the living God. The basis on which Christians read the sacrifices of the tabernacle in connection with Christ is in the New Testament.

Hebrews chapter 10 compares the repeated sacrifices with the sacrifice of Christ. The old sacrifices keep reminding people of sins, but Jesus offered His body once and for all. The sight of the priests standing and ministering again and again is presented side by side with the sight of Christ, who sat down at the right hand of God after offering one sacrifice. The heart that thought salvation would be completed only by increasing the number of sacrifices comes to look at His sufficient work.

Studying the altar of burnt offering does not mean that we must offer animal sacrifices again. Hebrews teaches that where there is remission of sins, there is no longer an offering for sin, and urges us to draw near to God by the blood of Jesus. Redemption is a word that makes us think of the work in which Christ gave Himself for sinners. Through that sacrifice we learn the grace of drawing near to God.

From His having the altar of burnt offering overlaid with bronze we learn the judgment of sin. We tend to regard only a part of ourselves as a little lacking and to put forward the rest of our goodness before God. But in the face of the judgment of sin we must look back on all of our thoughts, our hearts, and our deeds. God had pity on us, who cannot live relying on our own righteousness. He loved the sinners who had to receive the judgment of sin, and He Himself gave His Son as the sacrificial offering. The judgment of sin we see at the altar of burnt offering shows even more clearly the love of God, who saved us from sin.

There is no need to keep holding on to the sins that have been passed on to the Lord as if they were sins still remaining in me. Because Jesus bore all our sins when He received

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baptism from John and received all the judgment of our sins on the Cross, the person who believes this gospel is a righteous person who has fully received the remission of sins. It is not a name obtained because one's own actions have become perfect. It is a status obtained by believing in the righteousness of Christ, who solved sin and judgment. To believe in the once-and-for-all atonement is precisely to accept this completed salvation as one's own salvation.

Thanksgiving to God, who loved us when we were to be judged

When we look back on ourselves before the altar of burnt offering, we have nothing to boast of, but when we look at the Lord, who saved us from the sin of the world, the reason for thanksgiving is clear. It is not that we obtained the Lord's love by offering prayers of repentance to remove our sins. God loved us first and sent the Savior, who would bear the sin of the world. Even on a day when our faith toward God wavers, the salvation the Lord has already accomplished stands eternally in its place. Salvation does not change according to our feelings. When we know and believe His love, thanksgiving and praise flow out.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, there are times when we put the pleasures of the world, material things, or our own thoughts ahead of God. We must not regard such a heart as justified and keep following it. Think again of how much the Lord loved you. It is the Lord who paid the price for my sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, and gave eternal life to us who believe. Admit the wrong of having loved other things more than God, and look at

the Lord, who loved you first. The strength to follow the Lord comes not from boasting of our own resolve but from believing His love.

Do not think that you must distance yourself from God because of your shortcomings. Instead of hiding your sin, admit it, and believe in the salvation of His baptism and the Cross, through which He bore even that sin. God made us, who were to be judged, a people without sin, and established us as workers who preach the righteousness of God. Hearing the word of the Lord within the church and serving the gospel together is also a grace received through His love. Take part with thanksgiving in the work of preaching the love that saved you to those who do not yet know it. It is not labor to repay the price of the remission of sins by works, but service in following the Lord as one who has already been saved.

Now, keeping in our hearts the sacrifice we learned at the altar of burnt offering, we will move our eyes to the laver. To the priests who served the sacrifices, the ordinance of washing their hands and feet was also given. In the next chapter we will examine when and of whom that washing was required, and learn together the assurance of the washing away of sins through the laver.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do the procedures of the laying on of hands and the handling of blood differ between the burnt offering of the herd and the sin offering? Seeing the offering sacrificed in place of the sinner, what do you come to admit about your own sin and judgment?

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2. Examine together the representative work of John the Baptist and the word that Jesus fulfills all righteousness. Why are the bearing of sin through baptism and the judgment of the Cross one work of salvation?

3. On what is the assurance of being a righteous person who has received the complete remission of sins based? How does the thanksgiving of believing in God, who loved us first, lead to a life of following the Lord and serving the gospel? ✉

Chapter 7

The laver and the assurance of the washing away of sins

Read Together Exodus 29:4; 40:30–32 · Matthew 3:13–17 · John 13:1–17 · Hebrews 10:19–25; 10:35–39 · 1 John 1:7–10; 2:1–2; 5:6–13

< Exodus 30:17–21 >

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.'"

< Exodus 38:8 >

"He made the laver of bronze and its base of bronze, from the bronze mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

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The laver prepared between the altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle of meeting

At the altar of burnt offering we looked at the sacrifice for sinners. In the burnt offering of the herd, the laying on of hands by the person presenting the offering and the sprinkling of blood by the priest showed how solemn a matter it is to draw near before God. But in the court, besides the altar on which the sacrifice was offered, there was also a furnishing that held water. The priest had not finished his preparation merely by the fact that he had been entrusted with the service. He also had to follow the washing God commanded.

Exodus 30:17–21 commands that the laver and its base be made of bronze, that it be placed between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and that water be put in it. The laver is a furnishing that holds the water needed for washing. If this name is unfamiliar, you can first remember what it was used for. The altar of burnt offering is the place where the sacrifice is offered, and the laver is the place prepared for the priests to wash their hands and feet.

Those who use the laver are also specified. They are Aaron and his sons. They must wash their hands and feet when they go into the tabernacle of meeting and when they come near the altar to minister in the sacrifices. In Exodus 40:30–32 there appears the scene in which the laver is actually set in place and filled with water, and Moses, Aaron, and his sons wash their hands and feet with that water.

We should not turn its position between the altar and the tabernacle of meeting into a timetable of the sacrifice. If we think they washed only right before entering the holy place after finishing all the work at the altar, we narrow the command of the text. For He told them to wash also when they

came near the altar to minister. Only when we read together the layout of the court and the times when they had to wash do we see the role of the laver.

The hands and feet of those who serve the holy God

Exodus chapter 30 says repeatedly that they are to wash their hands and feet lest they die. Washing was not a procedure to be done when convenient and omitted when busy. It was an ordinance God commanded the priests and their descendants to keep. Even the priests who handled the offerings of the people had to follow this command before God. Being entrusted with a holy office does not mean that the ordinances that apply to oneself disappear.

In the work of the priests there was the labor of handling the sacrifices and the blood, the fire and the ashes. We can imagine their hands and feet getting dirty in the course of that service and water being needed to wash them. But the Bible text does not present the washing of hands and feet simply as a daily habit of removing dust or stains. It commands it as an ordinance needed for ministering before God, and even warns of death if it is not kept.

At the same time, Exodus chapter 30 does not say that all the moral sins of the priests were solved only by washing their hands and feet. The priests, too, needed sacrifices for atonement. Washing the hands and feet and offering a sacrifice for sin cannot be merged into the same procedure. After understanding the actual ordinance of the text, let us look together at the remission of sins today through that washing.

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It would also be good to distinguish the washing that appears in the consecration of the priests. In Exodus 29:4, Moses brings Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and has them washed with water. Then come the commands about the garments, the anointing, and the sacrifices. Chapter 30, on the other hand, speaks of washing the hands and feet repeatedly when carrying out their duties. The process of establishing them as priests and the washing when they ministered are each in their own context.

Serving the work of God does not mean that one's own weakness disappears. Even while preaching the gospel and helping that work, we can do wrong in heart, in word, and in deed. We cannot cover our own sins on the grounds that we have labored for others. God, who prepared water for the priests to wash with, also tells us the way to wash away sin by faith and serve again. The laver makes us look back not on how much we have served but on the faith in salvation with which we draw near before God.

The laver made from the mirrors of the women

Exodus 38:8 tells us a special fact about the material of the laver. The bronze laver and its base were made from the mirrors of the serving women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. The participation of the women remains in the explanation of the laver. As we learned earlier when we looked at the materials and offerings of the tabernacle, the furnishings God commanded were made through the actual things the people gave.

As we read this one verse, we want to know more about who these women were. But this verse does not explain their

names and number, or the detailed manner of their service. Just as a mirror shows us our own appearance, the law of God reveals the sin within us. Even what we thought was right, when held up to the word, turns out to have come from greed and pride. Comparing ourselves as better than others does not remove sin. Before the mirror-like law we come to admit that we are sinners who deserve to receive the judgment of God. Seeing the laver made of bronze we think of this judgment, and seeing the water prepared in it we learn the grace of the Lord, who washes away sin.

Here there is also the difference between examining oneself and obtaining the washing. Seeing one's own appearance does not make the stains disappear. Likewise, the assurance of the remission of sins does not arise merely from remembering many wrongs and rebuking oneself severely. Do not stop at discovering sin, but believe in what Jesus has done. Self-examination must lead in the direction of seeking the Savior.

The height and diameter of the laver and the amount of water it holds are not recorded in numbers in these passages. From this laver, whose measurements are not recorded, we learn the boundless love of God toward sinners. The love of the Lord, who knows our weakness and prepared the way to wash, does not stop at only the few wrongs we remember. Believe in the abundance of the salvation in which He bore all the sins of our whole lives.

Baptism and the Cross read in the laver

Let us look at the water of the laver in connection with the baptism Jesus received from John. Because Jesus bore the sin of mankind through His baptism, the person who believes in

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that work obtains the washing away of sins. In the bronze of the laver we come to think of the judgment of sin. Jesus received on the Cross the judgment of the sin He bore. The connection between the laying on of hands and baptism we saw in Chapter 6 continues here in the explanation of water and the washing away of sins.

Even after believing in the remission of sins, our own wrongs are exposed. “Personal sins” means the sins a person commits himself as he lives. When we find that we have lied, hated someone, or put our own greed first even after learning about salvation, our hearts become heavy. In the face of this very problem, think of the meaning of the washing the laver teaches.

The faith that seeks the laver is not a matter of demanding of Jesus a new baptism and a new sacrifice each time we sin. It is the faith that confirms again that Jesus has already borne even the price of that sin through the baptism He received from John and the Cross. While examining the washing away of sin and the judgment of sin as distinct, remember that baptism and the Cross together accomplish one complete salvation. This is the reason we do not read the laver as separate from the altar of burnt offering.

Jesus, who washed away our sins, is Himself God and the Savior who made us. He, who has no sin, came in human flesh, received baptism from John, and bore our sins Himself. Therefore what we learn from the water of the laver is not a mere purification rite but the washing away of sins that the Lord accomplished. The Lord bore those sins and received the judgment of sin on the Cross and rose again from death. We must know and believe Jesus, who is God, the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, all together.

1 John 5:6–8 says that Jesus Christ came by water and blood, and that the Spirit bears witness. The Holy Spirit does not lead us to produce the remission of sins by our own feelings. He makes us believe the word of the gospel of salvation God accomplished, and so saves us from all sins. A faith that leaves out either the bearing of sin through baptism or the receiving of judgment on the Cross cannot be called the same faith of salvation. Accept fully in your heart the work of the Lord's baptism, which is the basis for washing away sin.

Therefore, first read the ordinance of Exodus that commanded them to wash their hands and feet, and then look at the saving work of Christ recorded in the New Testament. The washing of the priests' hands and feet, the baptism Jesus received from John, and the baptism today's believers receive are events distinct from one another. What we must hold on to here is the faith that believes in the heart the baptism Jesus Christ received from John and the blood of the Cross.

The Lord, who washed the feet of His disciples

Now, remembering the washing away of sins at the laver, let us read John chapter 13. Jesus, while eating supper with His disciples, rises from the table, girds Himself with a towel, pours water into a basin, and washes their feet. The Gospel of John tells of this event together with the word that Jesus loved His own to the end.

Peter at first cannot accept Jesus washing his feet. But Jesus says that if He does not wash him, Peter has no part with Him. Then Peter asks Him to wash his hands and his head also. Jesus says that he who is bathed needs only to wash his feet. Receiving into the heart the word of the gospel of the truth of

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the washing away of sins that the Lord bestows must take precedence over the way Peter decided on.

Just as he who is bathed washes only his feet without needing to wash his whole body again, a person who has received the complete remission of sins needs the faith that believes the word of the truth of that salvation every day. The salvation Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John and the Cross has been completed once and for all. But we, who commit sins as we live, must confirm again through the word that the Lord has already borne even those sins. This is the faith in the truth that we learn through the washing of the laver and the washing of the disciples' feet.

Jesus washed Peter's feet first, knowing that Peter, and we ourselves, would sin. Peter's wrongs and our future wrongs could not take the Lord's love by surprise or overthrow the salvation He had prepared. We too, even when we discover our own failures, must not forget the fact that the Lord saved us from the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John. The Lord knew even the sins we had not yet committed and bore the sins of our whole lives through the baptism He received from John. We are not people who must obtain salvation all over again because of the sins we commit today. because of the sins committed today, but people who believe in the completed salvation and rise up.

Jesus also says that the disciples are not all clean, and John explains that this was because Jesus knew who would betray Him. We cannot say that the faith of all the disciples was the same merely by the fact that they took part in the outward act of having their feet washed. If we read this part together as well, we do not take the act of washing as a mechanical guarantee of salvation.

The Assurance of Salvation Must Be Grounded in the Word of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

When our hearts are in anguish after we have sinned, we come to wait for the moment when that anguish subsides. After crying a great deal, when our hearts become at ease, we may feel as if every problem has been solved. But distinguish such changes of feeling from faith based on the word. Do not seek the basis of the remission of sins in how strong an experience you have had.

What we are to examine by faith is what Jesus did for sinners. Know and believe the salvation accomplished through the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, and His rising again from death. Persuading oneself by repeating the words "I am clean" is different from reading the word of the Lord and relying on the work of Christ. Opening the Bible with a quiet heart and confirming the basis of salvation is also an important step of faith.

The sins we have committed are not washed away by offering prayers of repentance. If the remission of sins depended on how much we cried or whether we remembered and confessed every sin without omission, we could never stand before God with peace of mind. For there are also many sins we committed without knowing and sins we have forgotten. Jesus did not pick out and bear only the sins we have remembered. He had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. The washing away of sins is received through faith that believes in this salvation.

Therefore, when you realize your wrong, admit before God the sin you have committed just as it is. And believe as your Savior the Lord, who has already borne even that sin through

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His baptism and blood. Admitting sin does not mean that I will wash away my sin myself. It is believing that I have no ability to remove sin, and that the Lord has already borne it once and for all through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. The faith that seeks the laver is a faith in which such admission of sin and the assurance of the completed salvation exist together.

Here we must distinguish the fact that we commit sins in the flesh from the status of the righteous who have received the remission of sins before God. We must not deceive ourselves by saying that we have never done wrong. At the same time, the person who believes that Jesus solved all our sins and the judgment of sin once and for all believes that he is a righteous person without sin. The word "righteous" does not mean that one's actions are without fault. It is the confession of faith that sin has been passed on to the Lord and even its judgment has been finished. Admitting one's own wrongs and believing in the complete remission of sins do not contradict each other.

1 John 1:7–10 makes us abandon the attitude of hiding sin or deceiving ourselves by saying that we have not sinned. Then 2:1–2, while urging us not to sin, tells us that for us who have sinned, Jesus Christ the righteous is our Advocate. Because we believe in the righteousness of the Lord, we neither regard sin as justified nor despair because of sin and abandon salvation. Following the word, admit your sin and draw near to the Savior, who bore that sin.

Do not turn the assurance of being a righteous person without sin into permission to sin as you please. The Lord washed away our sins so that we might serve God with clean hearts. Instead of continuing to insist that only your own thoughts are right even after admitting your wrong before the Lord, turn your heart by the word and follow the Lord. Not

remaining in endless self-condemnation but believing in the salvation of the Lord is what becomes the strength to serve again.

Relying on the washing, we serve God again

Hebrews 10:19–22 urges us to draw near to God on the basis of the blood of Jesus and the High Priest over the house of God. Verse 22 says, having our hearts *"sprinkled from an evil conscience"* and our bodies washed with pure water, let us draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Reading this word, we come to think about how the blood and the washing we learned in the tabernacle are connected to the matter of drawing near to God.

Following that exhortation, Hebrews teaches us to hold fast the confession of our hope, to stir up love and good works in one another, and not to forsake assembling together. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not stop at looking into his own heart alone, but must lead his life of faith united with the Church of God. Within the church we hear the same word of salvation, share our faith with those who believed before us, and serve together the work God has entrusted to us. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in those who have received the remission of sins, makes us understand the word and leads us to follow the Lord.

Do not think that you must abandon the work of serving the gospel because your shortcomings have been exposed in the course of it. Just as the priests needed water to wash with even while they ministered, we too must keep relying on the Lord's washing away of sins while we serve. When we admit our wrong and believe again in the baptism by which He bore even

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that sin, we can rise up with clean hearts. If we put forward only the words that we have already been saved and turn away from the sin exposed in our hearts, it is hard to keep serving boldly by faith. That is why the faith of the laver is needed every day by the workers of God.

Preaching the gospel is the work of delivering the word of life to those who have not yet been saved, and at the same time it is the service that makes us ourselves live by that word. When we preach the grace by which He made us righteous people without sin, what we believe and live by also becomes clearer. We serve the gospel not because our deeds are perfect but by faith because the salvation the Lord accomplished is perfect. As Hebrews 10:35–39 exhorts, do not cast away your confidence, but believe the promise and endure. Instead of sinking down in discouragement as you look at yourself, rely on the Lord, who saved you, and serve the gospel together with the church.

In the laver is contained the will of the Lord, who loved us to the end. Because Jesus bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John and the Cross, draw near before God today also with the faith of a righteous person who has received the remission of sins. The Lord washes us, who are weak, and makes us serve His work. At the altar of burnt offering we learned about the sacrifice, and at the laver about the faith in the washing away of sins that we are to rely on every day. Now, in the next chapter, we will look at how the boards and the sockets form the main tent, and learn more about the grace by which the people who have been saved serve God together.

Questions for Reflection

1. In Exodus 30:17–21, when must the priests wash their hands and feet? What do the bronze, the mirrors, and the water held in the laver make us learn about the judgment of sin and washing?

2. Although the atonement Jesus accomplished was completed once and for all, why do we need the faith of the laver every day? How can admitting sin and the status of a righteous person who has received the remission of sins be explained together?

3. When you discover your own wrong while serving the gospel, what will you rely on? Think about a life of hearing the word within the church, believing in the washing away of sins, and serving again. ✉

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Chapter 8

The sanctuary set up on boards and sockets

Read Together Exodus 26:31–37; 30:11–16; 38:25–28 · Matthew 3:13–17 · 1 John 5:6–8 · Ephesians 2:8–10, 19–22; 4:3–7 · Romans 3:20; 6:23

< Exodus 26:29–30 >

"You shall overlay the boards with gold, make their rings of gold as holders for the bars, and overlay the bars with gold. And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain."

Looking at the tent from the laver

In the previous chapter we looked at the laver, where the priests washed their hands and feet before ministering. Now we will look at the main tent that lies beyond it. Under the coverings are placed the furnishings for serving God. With what is that space set up? Exodus 26:15–30 leads our eyes to the boards and sockets, the rings and bars. God appointed the structure surrounding the furnishings as much as the furnishings that catch the eye.

If we think of the tabernacle as a tent made only of cloth, this passage feels unfamiliar. The text commands that boards be made of acacia wood and set up. A board is a member of the wall made of wood. These are set up side by side and joined to

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form the sides and the back of the tent. If we think of the structure in which boards overlaid with gold are set up and the coverings are laid over them, the long command for construction gradually comes into view.

Here we must distinguish the boards from the pillars. The boards form the walls of the tent, and the pillars are used to hang the screen of the entrance or the inner veil. Though all of them are made of wood and have parts overlaid with gold, they are not the same members. Only when we first know the position and role of each can we avoid confusing the number and material of the sockets as well.

The tabernacle is the sanctuary God had the people prepare in order to dwell among them. Therefore studying its structure also belongs to learning the will of God. However, the same word is also used to refer to the front space inside the tent, the *"holy place."* The board structure we examine in this chapter is the structure of the main tent that surrounds not only that front space but also the inner Most Holy Place.

Forty-eight boards and ninety-six sockets of silver

The length of one board is 10 cubits and its width is 1.5 cubits. God has twenty boards of the same dimensions set up on the south and twenty on the north. On the west, the back of the tent, He has six placed, and two more boards added for the two corners. Adding these numbers together, the boards come to forty-eight. The number forty-eight is obtained by adding up each part that appears in the text.

Each board has two tenons. A tenon refers to a part that projects so that it can be fitted into another member. The text says to make two sockets of silver under each board for its two

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tenons. If we remember the relationship of one board to two sockets, we can understand why forty sockets of silver were needed on the south and forty on the north. Under the eight boards on the west, sixteen are placed.

Therefore the sockets of silver that support the boards are ninety-six in all. This number does not include the four sockets of silver of the four pillars that support the veil between the holy place and the Most Holy Place. If we add those four sockets that appear in Exodus 26:32, it becomes one hundred. Exodus 38:27 calls these *"the sockets of the sanctuary and **the sockets** of the veil"* and records that together they are one hundred. That is, the sockets under the boards and the sockets under the pillars of the veil were counted together. The two passages do not speak of different numbers but show different ranges of calculation.

On the other hand, the pillars on which the screen of the entrance of the tent is hung are five, and under them five sockets of bronze are placed. Try placing the ninety-six sockets of silver, the four sockets of silver of the pillars of the veil, and the five sockets of bronze of the pillars of the entrance each in its own place. You can see that behind the common name "socket" there are different positions. When we read the detailed record of the Bible calmly, even the numbers that were complicated fall into order.

The measurements written in the Bible and the measurements of reconstruction drawings

The cubit is an ancient unit of length based on the length of the arm. If, as in Chapter 3, we take 1 cubit as 45 centimeters to aid understanding, one board comes to about 4.5 meters in

length and about 67.5 centimeters in width. This is an example obtained by fixing a basis of conversion. What we should remember before the figures in meters are the 10 cubits and 1.5 cubits the text tells us.

If twenty boards 1.5 cubits wide are placed side by side on the south, it comes to 30 cubits. We reconstruct the appearance of the tabernacle by examining such calculations together with the length of the coverings and the explanation of the joining at the corners. The widely used reconstruction drawings show the main tent as 30 cubits long, 10 cubits wide, and 10 cubits high. But these three measurements are not recorded in one sentence like a finished blueprint.

In particular, we must not take the 12 cubits obtained by simply adding the widths of the eight boards on the west as the interior width just as it stands. For two of them are used at the corners. An explanation of the reconstruction is needed according to how the boards interlock at the corners and how the thickness of the walls is handled. The text speaks of the joining at the corners, but it does not draw every cross-section for us like a modern architectural drawing.

Therefore, when looking at a picture of the tabernacle, it would be good to examine together the measurements written in the Bible and the picture that combines those measurements. A picture helps us understand the long explanation. At the same time, we do not regard everything seen in the picture, such as the thickness of the boards or the height of the pillars, as the direct statement of the text. Through this distinction we can remember more accurately what the Bible clearly says.

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Standing on sockets and joined by bars

The sockets support the boards from below, and the bars join the boards together. God says to make bars of acacia wood and to place five on the south, five on the north, and five on the west. The middle bar is made to reach from one end of the boards to the other. On the boards, rings of gold are made as holders for the bars, and the boards and the bars are overlaid with gold.

Reading this explanation, we can see the fact that the members that make up the tabernacle are not placed separately. The boards stand on the sockets and are joined by the bars and rings. That each piece of wood exists and that one tent is set up are different things. Only when the members find their places within the relationship God appointed does a space that can actually be used come into being.

If we pay attention only to the golden surface, it is easy to miss the sockets and the connecting members beneath it. But the text explains the visible materials and their structure together. Supporting with silver, overlaying the bars of acacia wood with gold, and making the rings are all included in the command to set up the tabernacle. No part was left to be omitted according to the mood of the workers.

The last verse, verse 30, says to raise up the tabernacle according to the pattern shown on the mountain. The pattern refers to the shape and style God showed. The standard that concludes the detailed commands is not the taste of Moses or the pride of the people. It is to set it up in accordance with the will God showed. Before this word we too look back on the standard of our serving God. Before putting forward familiar customs or visible results, we learn the attitude of listening to what God has said.

The gift of salvation examined in the sockets of silver

Exodus chapter 38 tells us where the silver used for the sockets of silver came from. From the silver collected from the congregation that was numbered, one hundred talents were used to make the one hundred sockets of the sanctuary and the veil. Exodus 30:11–16 commands that those who take part in the numbering give a ransom for their lives. It has the rich and the poor alike give the fixed half shekel. Examining the sockets of the tabernacle leads on to the ordinance that keeps the people and the atonement in remembrance.

The sockets of silver show the gift of salvation God has given us. Look at the two sockets of silver under each board. That Jesus received baptism from John and bore our sins, and that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross are the two graces of salvation God has bestowed on sinners. It is not a salvation we obtained by paying a price. Just as the boards do not stand by their own strength but stand on the sockets of silver, we too stand through the salvation God has accomplished for us.

The boards of acacia wood represent us, who have sin and weakness, and the gold that wraps that wood represents the faith that believes the word of God. Wrapping the wood with gold does not mean that the wood inside is changed into a different material. Even in us who have been saved, the shortcomings of the flesh are exposed. But the basis that makes us stand before God is not conduct that has become perfect by itself but the salvation Jesus accomplished. The person who stands on grace and believes that word becomes a board that forms the house of God.

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Knowing the meaning of the sockets of silver does not end with memorizing the names of materials. We must accept the gift Christ has bestowed as our own salvation. The ransom ordinance of Exodus cannot be carried over to today as meaning that we buy salvation with offerings. Ephesians 2:8–10 teaches that salvation is the grace of God, and that those who have been saved were created to do good works. It is not the order of piling up merits in order to obtain salvation, but the order of serving the Lord with the grace of the salvation we have received.

The complete salvation shown in the two tenons

The two tenons under each board teach us that we must believe in the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross together. Just as a board with one tenon left and the other cut off cannot be called the board God commanded, so believing only in the blood of the Cross while leaving out the Lord's baptism, or believing only in the baptism while leaving out the judgment of the blood, is not believing in the complete salvation. Because Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism, He bore those sins and received the judgment on the Cross. The transfer of sin and the redemptive judgment for that sin are within one salvation.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the news of salvation that Jesus, who is God, came in human flesh and bore the sin of mankind when He received baptism from John, bore that sin and received the judgment on the Cross, and rose again from death. Here the sin of the world does not refer only to the sins we committed before we believed in Jesus. It includes all the sins of our whole lives, which we commit from the day we

are born until the day we die. The Lord bore all those sins once and for all and finished the judgment for those sins. The person who believes that work with his heart receives the remission of sins and becomes a righteous person.

In Matthew 3:13–17, Jesus fulfills all righteousness by receiving baptism from John. He had the sin of the world passed on to Him through John, who, as the representative of mankind, baptized Him. 1 John 5:6–8 says that Jesus Christ came by water and blood, and that the Spirit bears witness. If we look at the two tenons in the light of this word, we come to know that the baptism that washed us and the judgment of the Cross He received in our place cannot be separated. The meaning of the two tenons lies in this salvation that Christ actually accomplished.

Therefore it is not that Jesus must take away our sins again and die on the Cross again each time our shortcomings are exposed. Nor is it that we remove sin little by little by repeating prayers of repentance, or that we polish ourselves for a long time and finally become people without sin. The remission of sins is a gift received by believing in the salvation of the baptism and the blood that the Lord has already accomplished. Even when you confess a wrong, believe that the Lord has borne even this sin. This faith cleanses the conscience and makes us serve the Lord with thanksgiving.

Just as we check the sockets when a board wobbles, look back on the Lord's two graces of salvation when your heart wavers. Salvation does not become more complete because today's feelings are good, nor does the Lord's salvation fall short because you are lacking. The person who believes with his heart in the baptism by which He bore sin and the Cross by which He finished the judgment stands on the complete salvation the Lord has bestowed.

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Joined by the same faith, like the middle bar

Now look at the middle bar that joins the boards. The bar that reaches from one end to the other shows that those who have received the remission of sins are of one heart and united in the same faith. The church is not merely a place where people of similar personalities or people who like the same things gather. It is the house in which the righteous who have received the remission of sins through the baptism and the blood of Jesus gather together and serve God. Ephesians 2:19–22 also teaches that the saints are the household of God and are being built together with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

Ephesians 4:3–7 urges us to keep the unity the Holy Spirit has made. The Lord who saved us is one, and the basis of the salvation and faith we have received is also the same. The Holy Spirit dwells in the person who has received the remission of sins by believing with his heart in the gospel of the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. The same Holy Spirit comes not only upon those who have attended church for a long time but also upon those who have just received the remission of sins. Therefore do not forget that we are one family who, regardless of the training of the life of faith, have become brothers and sisters by receiving the gift of salvation.

Even when shortcomings are still seen in those who believe together with us, we must remember this foundation. Teach them the word they do not know, pray together with them in their difficulties, and wait for them to grow in faith. While you yourself stand by grace, you must not demand of others that they have a perfect appearance before you can be together with them. The same faith that the Lord has saved us completely joins our hearts together. Learning the word and caring for one

another within the church is what keeps this unity in our actual lives.

This unity leads to the service of preaching the gospel. The lampstand of Exodus 25:31–37 is also made of one piece of gold. We will examine its detailed structure in Chapter 10, but here too we can remember that many people serve with one faith and one purpose. The work of preaching the gospel through literature also requires many labors: preaching the word, putting the writing in order, and supporting that work. When each person serves together in the place entrusted to him, others also come to hear this word of salvation.

Remember the boards that stand on the sockets of silver and are joined by the bars. We must first receive the same salvation, and within that faith we must serve the Lord together. It is not only the conspicuous roles that are precious. Regard the labor that is not seen as precious as well, if it is for the gospel. For the people who have been saved to support one another's labor and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the joy enjoyed in the house of God.

Looking back on the foundation of faith

The sockets of bronze of the five pillars at the entrance of the tent teach us the judgment of sin. Their position differs from that of the sockets of silver under the boards, but before them we come to know the need for salvation even more clearly. As Romans 3:20 says, by the law we come to know sin. When we hold ourselves up to the commandments of God, we cannot deny that there is sin not only in our actions but also in our hearts. Romans 6:23 teaches that the wages of sin is death. It is not a matter to pass over by merely admitting the fact that

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we have sin. We must know that we were in the position of being judged for that sin and ending up in hell.

Jesus came to save us, who were such people. He bore sin through His baptism and received on the Cross in our place the judgment of sin that we were to receive. Therefore do not put forward the number of years of your life of faith or the amount of your service as the basis of salvation. We must admit our own sin and judgment and believe with our hearts in the salvation the Lord accomplished. When we believe that it is Jesus who removed our sins and made us righteous, we go forward as children of God from the place where we remained in fear.

The meaning of the sockets and of the joining comes together here as one. We, who were sinners to be judged for our own sins, receive salvation through the gift of baptism and blood, stand in the house of God by believing the word, and serve the gospel united with our brothers and sisters in the Holy Spirit. It is not a place to put forward my own boasting. It is a place to give thanks for the salvation the Lord accomplished and to preach it to those who do not yet know this gospel. Believe in the grace that supports us, and serve the Lord together in the same faith.

Now we can see the relationship between the walls of the tent and the sockets, the bars and the rings. But the explanation of the tent does not end when the walls have been set up. Over them several layers of coverings are placed, and inside there is the veil that divides the space. In the next chapter we will look at those coverings and the veil, and read how Hebrews explains the way of drawing near to God through Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

1. Where are the ninety-six sockets of silver, the four sockets of silver, and the five sockets of bronze each placed? Explain how the positions differ even though they are all called "sockets."

2. What are the two graces of salvation shown by the two tenons and the two sockets of silver? How should we believe in this grace when our own sins and shortcomings are exposed?

3. Think about the joining of the middle bar together with Ephesians 4:3–7. How should caring for a person who has just received the remission of sins as the same family and serving the gospel together be shown? ✉

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Chapter 9

The coverings and the veil, and the way opened

Read Together Exodus 36:8–19, 35–38 · Leviticus 16:2, 11–17 · Isaiah 53:1–12 · Matthew 27:50–51 · Hebrews 9:6–14; 10:18, 23–25 · John 10:9

< Exodus 26:31–37 >

"You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side. You shall make a screen for the door of the tabernacle, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. And you shall make for the screen five pillars of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold; their hooks shall be gold, and you shall cast five sockets of bronze for them."

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< Hebrews 10:19–22 >

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

What was laid over the walls that were set up?

In the previous chapter we looked at the structure in which the boards stand on sockets of silver and are joined by bars. Now we will look at the materials that cover the top and the veil that divides the inner space. Knowing the walls does not mean that the whole appearance of the tent has been pictured. Only when we know what it was covered with and where the screens were hung does the relationship between the holy place and the Most Holy Place become clearer.

Exodus chapter 26 actually explains the coverings first, and then the boards and the bars. Our examining the structure first was an order chosen to help the reader's understanding. When we read the commands of the Bible, it would be good to remember their original order as well. God speaks of the cloth, the wood, and the metal each in turn, and has them form one tabernacle together.

In this chapter we must distinguish the cloth that covers the top from the cloth hung between the spaces. The Bible text calls the cloth that covers the top "curtains," and for the cloth of the inner boundary and the entrance it also uses the expressions "veil" and "screen." Here we will call what covers

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the top “the coverings,” what divides the holy place from the Most Holy Place “the inner veil,” and what is hung where one enters the main tent “the entrance screen.” It is a distinction meant to help us learn position and function before names.

The fact that there are screens shows the boundary of the place where God dwells. Within that order we learn how we must draw near to God, who is in the midst of His people. At the same time, we who read the New Testament also examine how this boundary is connected to the saving work of Christ. Starting from observing the materials of the coverings, let us go forward step by step toward the faith that draws near to God.

The inner covering with cherubim woven into it

At the innermost layer is placed the cloth made of fine woven linen and blue, purple, and scarlet thread. Into that cloth cherubim are skillfully woven. The name “cherubim” we also meet in the words explaining the mercy seat on the ark. Here it is enough to remember the point that cherubim are depicted on the cloth that covers the inside of the tent. The text does not tell us the exact size or layout of the design.

This covering is made of ten curtains. One curtain is 28 cubits long and 4 cubits wide, and all are of the same dimensions. Five curtains are coupled together to make each of two sets, and on the edge where the two sets meet, fifty loops of blue are placed on each. A loop is a ring-shaped part made so that something else can be hooked or threaded through it. When the loops facing each other are joined with fifty clasps of gold, it becomes one covering.

Along with the beauty of the materials, the text explains carefully the method of joining. It has them weave to the same

measurements, prepare the parts that will meet each other, and join the two sets. The fact that many curtains have been gathered does not by itself make one tabernacle. They must be joined as the word says. Having looked at the relationship between the boards and the bars in the previous chapter, here we see the relationship among the cloth, the loops, and the clasps.

The length of 28 cubits is the length of one curtain. It should not be read as meaning the same as the length of the completed main tent. Since the coverings pass over the top of the tent and hang down the sides, the measurements of the cloth need not be the same as the measurements of the floor. Looking at which direction the cloth is laid in a reconstruction drawing helps understanding. However, we must distinguish the arrangement supplied by the drawing from the dimensions of one curtain specified in the text.

The tent of goats' hair and the leather coverings above it

Over the inner cloth is laid the tent made of goats' hair. This is different from a tent made by joining goat skins together. Exodus 26:7 specifies goats' hair as the material. Eleven curtains are made, and each curtain is 30 cubits long and 4 cubits wide. The length of one curtain is 2 cubits longer than that of the inner cloth, and the total number of curtains is also one more.

After five curtains and six curtains are coupled together respectively, the two sets are joined with fifty clasps of bronze. Whereas the clasps joining the inner covering were of gold, the clasps joining this tent are of bronze. The text commands that

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half of the sixth curtain be doubled over and hung at the forefront of the tabernacle, that the remaining half curtain of the tent hang over the back, and that what remains of the length hang over the sides, a cubit on each side. The size of the cloth and the parts that remain have an actual use in covering the tent.

Over that are placed the covering of ram skins dyed red and the outermost leather covering. In this way we can distinguish in order the inner fabric, the tent of goats' hair, the ram skins dyed red, and the outer skins. However, the length and width of the two leather coverings are not given separately in this text. We do not apply the measurements of the inner fabric or the dimensions of the tent of goats' hair to the leather coverings as they are.

Exodus 26:14 renders the material of the outer covering as *"badger skins."* Depending on the Bible translation, the animal is expressed differently, or the nature of the skin is indicated without fixing the name of a particular animal. Therefore here we will call it the outer leather covering. Even without determining what animal it was or imagining its color and waterproofing in detail, we can clearly read the command to place yet another leather covering over the tabernacle.

The salvation of Christ read in the coverings

In the four layers of coverings is revealed the salvation Jesus Christ has bestowed on us. The blue thread of the inner covering means the baptism Jesus received from John, the purple thread His divinity and kingship, and the scarlet thread the blood He shed on the Cross. Jesus, who is God, came in the flesh of a man, had our sins passed on to Him through His baptism, and bore those sins and received the judgment on the

Cross. The meaning of the colored threads leads us to know this work and believe it with our hearts and receive the complete remission of sins.

The fine woven linen shows the word of salvation that God promised and fulfilled. The salvation promised in the Old Testament Jesus fulfilled in the New Testament through His baptism and blood. The person who believes that word has all his sins washed away and becomes righteous. Even when we think of the cleanness of the linen thread, we cannot boast that we have made our conduct white by ourselves. The Lord, who fulfilled the promise, has made us a people without sin.

The tent of goats' hair shows the salvation of the Lord, who made us holy through the sacrifice in place of sinners. The ram skins dyed red teach the sacrifice in which Jesus, who bore sin through His baptism, shed His blood and died, and the outer leather covering teaches the life in which Christ humbled Himself and was despised. If we examine the coverings from the outermost inward, we also come to think of the process by which we accept salvation. It is first to admit our own sin and our position of being judged, to know that we need a Savior who will be sacrificed in our place, and to believe that Jesus, who is God, saved us completely through His baptism and the Cross.

There is meaning also in the material of the clasps that join the coverings. The clasps of gold of the inner covering represent the faith that believes the word of God, and the clasps of bronze of the tent of goats' hair represent the judgment of sin. Salvation was not accomplished by passing over sin lightly. Jesus had that sin passed on to Him and paid the price of that sin on the Cross. We believe that that judgment was carried out on the Lord in our place. Faith that believes both in the bearing of sin shown by the blue thread and in the blood shown by the

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scarlet thread makes us receive the salvation of these coverings as our own.

Reading Isaiah chapter 53 together with this, look at the Lord, who bore our sins and suffered. The worth of Christ does not lie in how splendid He appeared to people. What we needed was not a Savior to boast of by outward appearance but a Savior who would actually solve our sin and judgment. Jesus received baptism from John and bore our sins, was sacrificed on the Cross, and rose again from death. We must know and give thanks for that love with which He was humbled for us and gave Himself.

Isaiah chapter 53 tells of the despised Servant suffering because of the transgressions of others and bearing their iniquities. If we read the meaning of the coverings in the light of this word of suffering, we see even more clearly the love of the One who accomplished salvation. Humbling and sacrifice, the washing away of sin and the fulfillment of the promise were accomplished in one Savior. We who have received the Lord's love must also not turn away from the shortcomings of our brothers and sisters, but look to their needs and serve the gospel together. The thanksgiving of believing in the Lord, who gave Himself for us, leads to labor for one another.

Distinguishing the entrance screen from the inner veil

Having examined the materials that cover the top of the tent, we will now look at the two hanging cloths that stand. First, at the entrance of the main tent is hung a screen woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. The pillars of acacia wood for this screen are five. The

pillars are overlaid with gold and fitted with hooks of gold, and the five sockets under them are made of bronze. It is the very entrance we distinguished from the sockets of silver in the previous chapter.

Inside the tent there is another veil that divides the holy place from the Most Holy Place. For this veil the same kinds of thread are used, but the command to weave cherubim into it with an artistic design is given as well. The pillars are four, and the sockets under them are also four, and these sockets are of silver. It would be good to remember that the five pillars and the sockets of bronze are placed at the entrance, and the four pillars and the sockets of silver at the inner veil.

The inner veil divides the holy place from the Most Holy Place. The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat on it are placed inside the veil, and the table and the lampstand are placed in the holy place outside the veil. The table is on the north, and the lampstand on the south. Even within the same tent, the positions of the spaces and the furnishings are fixed. The veil is not merely a decoration to block the view but a boundary that divides the two spaces.

The blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the linen we saw at the gate of the court are also used for the entrance of the tent and the inner veil. The salvation by which we draw near to God is not placed on a different basis at each stage. We go forward believing in the same Jesus Christ, who removed sin through His baptism and blood. In John 10:9, Jesus calls Himself the door and says that whoever enters through Him will be saved. While we examine the hanging cloths of the tabernacle, the One we must hold on to is this very Savior.

The sockets of bronze of the pillars at the entrance show again the judgment of sin, and the sockets of silver of the pillars of the inner veil show again the grace of salvation God

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has given. We were people to be judged for sin, but we draw near to God by the grace whereby the Lord bore sin and was judged in our place. Looking at the pillars overlaid with gold, think also of the place of those who believe in that salvation and serve the house of God. It is to stand in the faith of having received the remission of sins oneself and to become a worker who preaches to others as well the way of salvation by which they draw near to the Lord.

The holiness taught by the closed boundary

Having learned in this way the meaning of drawing near to God by believing in Christ, we must also read the service actually performed in the old tabernacle in its proper place. Not all the people of that time opened the veil and entered the Most Holy Place. Hebrews 9:6–7 explains that the priests went into the first part and ministered, and that into the second part the high priest alone went, with blood, for the appointed service of atonement once a year. The blood the high priest offered was for his own transgressions and those of the people.

In Leviticus 16:2, God tells Aaron not to come at just any time inside the veil before the mercy seat. In the commands that follow are recorded washing his body and putting on the holy garments, offering a sacrifice for himself, and ministering with incense and blood. Even the office of high priest was not an authority to act as he pleased before God. He had to follow the way God had appointed.

This boundary cannot be read as meaning that God hated the people and would not let them come near. God had already said that He would dwell among them, and within that He also gave the ordinances of atonement. He made them learn at the

same time the grace of His being with them and His holiness. The matter of a sinful person drawing near to God is not light, but God teaches the way to deal with that matter.

After explaining this service, Hebrews moves its gaze to Christ. Christ accomplished eternal atonement not with the blood of animals but with His own blood. Unlike the sacrifices repeated every year, the atonement the Lord accomplished is not a salvation with a part remaining to be filled in again. His blood cleanses the conscience and makes us serve the living God. Hebrews 10:18 also teaches that after sins have been remitted there is no longer any need to offer a sacrifice for sin. Now our eyes looking at the veil turn toward the salvation the Lord has completed.

The torn veil of the temple and the new and living way

Matthew 27:50–51 records that *"the veil of the temple"* was torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died. What the Bible text calls the veil of the temple is the veil of the temple in the days of Jesus. We must not think of it as if the cloth made in the wilderness in the days of Moses had remained hanging until then and was torn. We read the meaning of the boundary learned in the tabernacle in connection with the event in the temple.

The torn veil shows that the Lord has opened the way that was blocked by sin. Jesus received baptism from John and bore the sin of the world, and received its punishment on the Cross. Even the sins that are still in the future for us are included in the sin of the world that the Lord bore. The Lord bore all the sins of our whole lives once and for all and finished their

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judgment. The Lord who died on the Cross rose again and became our eternal Savior. We draw near to God believing not in One who is in death but in the Lord, who has overcome death.

Hebrews 10:19–22 explains this way even more directly. Verse 19 says that we have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. Boldness means the confidence with which we can draw near to God. Then verse 20 speaks of the new and living way opened through the veil, and connects that veil to the flesh of Jesus. We can read the meaning that the work of Christ, who gave Himself in our place, is the basis for drawing near to God.

We have a High Priest over the house of God. Therefore those who have received the remission of sins can draw near to God boldly. It is not that we claim to be without sin because we have lived well on our own. It is that we confess that, because all our sins were passed on to Jesus through His baptism and their judgment was finished on the Cross, we who believe in this salvation have become righteous people without sin. This is different from saying that there is not a single fault in the conduct of the flesh. It is the confession that the remission of sins the Lord accomplished is complete. Hebrews urges us to draw near, relying on this Savior, with a true heart and in the assurance of faith.

Drawing near to God by the opened way

We will now look again at the exhortation of Hebrews, which we read in Chapter 7 together with the washing, in the context of the way Christ has opened. When we are about to pray, we sometimes recall the sins we have committed and the

wrongs we keep repeating. Do not hide those wrongs or take them lightly, but turn from the wrong actions according to the word. We must confess before God and believe that the Lord bore even this sin through His baptism and was judged on the Cross. It is not that we offer prayers of repentance or fasting prayers like a sin offering in order to produce the remission of sins anew. It is that we believe in the salvation already accomplished and draw near to the Father with thanksgiving.

Hebrews 10:22 speaks of having our hearts *"sprinkled from an evil conscience."* It then urges that, since our bodies have been washed with pure water, we draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith. The Lord did not tell us to come near while leaving us as we were in the consciousness of sin. He solved the matter of the washing away of sin and of judgment and gave us the way to serve God with a clean conscience. Hold on to the salvation the Lord accomplished as a clearer basis than your own shortcomings.

In this exhortation, the blood and the flesh of Jesus, the work of the High Priest, and the cleansing of heart and body lie together. Do not set the baptism of Jesus and the Cross apart, but believe in them as one work that saved us completely. To the person who knows that word and believes it with his heart, God gives the Holy Spirit and makes him His child. It is not that one has received the remission of sins only when a special sensation arises. Believe that salvation has been accomplished according to the word He promised, and draw near calling God Father.

This faith is kept together within the Church of God. Hebrews 10:23–25 urges us to hold fast the confession of our hope, to consider one another and encourage love and good works, and not to neglect assembling together. Do not try to measure whether you are saved by examining only your own

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feelings. Hear the word with those who believe the same gospel, and help discouraged brothers and sisters to hold on again to the Lord's complete remission of sins. Our service is to preach the gospel together as those whom God has made His children, so that others also may go forward by this opened way.

Examining the coverings and the veil, we have seen how God receives sinners as His own people. Jesus, who bore sin through His baptism, was judged on the Cross, and rose again, has completed the way of salvation. The person who believes in that salvation with his heart receives the remission of all sins and goes forward as a child of God. Before the opened way, do not keep measuring only your own qualifications, but believe in the grace the Lord has given and serve with thanksgiving. Now, in the next chapter, we will look at the seven lamps that light the inside of the holy place. How was the service in which the saved people of God kept the light burning together carried out?

Questions for Reflection

1. Explain, distinguishing each, the four layers of materials that cover the top, the entrance screen of the tent, and the veil between the holy place and the Most Holy Place. How do the number of pillars and the material of the sockets of the two hanging cloths differ?

2. How do the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the linen, and the clasps of gold and bronze, show the salvation Jesus accomplished? What is the basis on which a person who

believes in this salvation confesses that he is a righteous person without sin?

3. Why can we draw near to God boldly even while confessing our sins and shortcomings when they are exposed? How can we help one another within the church to hold on to this faith? ✉

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Chapter 10

The seven lamps that light the holy place

Read Together Exodus 26:35; 30:7–8 · Leviticus 24:1–4 · John 8:12 · Matthew 3:13–17 · 1 John 5:6–12 · Acts 2:38 · Revelation 1:12–20

< Exodus 25:31–40 >

"You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall be of one piece. And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. Three bowls shall be made like almond blossoms on one branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond blossoms on the other branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower—and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand. On the lampstand itself four bowls shall be made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower. And there shall be a knob under the first two branches of the same, a knob under the second two branches of the same, and a knob under the third two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. Their knobs and their branches shall be of one piece; all of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold. You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give

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light in front of it. And its wick-trimmers and their trays shall be of pure gold. It shall be made of a talent of pure gold, with all these utensils. And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

< Exodus 27:20–21 >

"And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel."

The light we meet under the coverings

In the previous chapter we looked at the coverings and the veil of the tabernacle. The space God appointed had boundaries, and there was also an order for those who did their work within those boundaries. Now let us turn our eyes to the furnishings inside the holy place. The seven lamps illuminate the holy place where the priests carry out their service. When we think of the holy place enclosed by the coverings and the veil, we can understand why God carefully appointed even the furnishings and the oil for the lamps.

Exodus 26:35 tells us that the lampstand is on the south side of the tabernacle, and the table on which the bread is placed is across from it on the north side. The two furnishings are placed outside the veil that screens the Most Holy Place, that is, in the holy place. This furnishing, which the Bible text calls the

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"lampstand," is the gold furnishing of the holy place that holds the seven lamps.

Also, this is not a candlestick in which seven candles are placed. The lamps hold oil and are lit. So when we read about the lampstand, rather than picturing only the beautiful gold decoration, we must also think of the oil being supplied and the fire being tended. Following the command to make the furnishing, God also appointed the oil the people of Israel were to bring and the time of service the priests were to keep.

The light inside the holy place was not a decoration lit according to the personal taste of the priests. It was a light prepared for the service God had appointed. Today we, too, easily remember only the conspicuous scenes of worship. But for worship to take place, there is someone who prepares and looks after things. The word about the seven lamps makes us see that concrete service, and further makes us ask what light we have been called to shine. God gathered the righteous who have received the remission of sins into the church in order to have them preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world.

The shaft and the branches that came out of one piece of gold

Exodus 25:31–37 explains the base and the shaft of the lampstand, its bowls, its ornamental knobs and flowers, and its lamps. Three branches come out on each side of the central shaft. The six branches and the central shaft are joined in harmony, and seven lamps are placed on them to give light in front. The branches and the decorations are not a collection of

unrelated objects but are made by hammering the gold so that they form one body.

Unlike the table, which is acacia wood overlaid with gold, the lampstand is made of pure gold. The text commands that a talent of pure gold be used for the lampstand and all the utensils that belong to it. This word must not be read as meaning that a talent was used for the base alone. Nor does knowing the unit of weight make it possible to calculate the height of the lampstand. Exodus does not record the height or the overall width of the lampstand.

If we remember that fact, we can look at pictures or models rightly. We cannot say, as if it were the record of the Bible, at exactly what angle the branches curved upward, or whether the furnishing came up to a person's waist or shoulders. What we know for certain is the materials and composition God appointed and the use of the seven lamps. A model helps us understand the word, but it cannot supply in its place measurements that are not in the word.

The command for construction ends with the charge to make it according to the pattern Moses saw on the mountain. Beauty and skill were used in responding to the word of God. Those who made the tabernacle had to follow the command they had received even while showing their craftsmanship. We too should use the abilities we have in the work of serving, but must not forget what we are doing that work for. What should shine is not the name of the one who serves but the will of God, who receives that service.

Think of this pure gold in connection with faith. The faith that believes the word God has given just as it is, without mixing in one's own thoughts or other ways of salvation, is a faith like pure gold. It is not that we become gold because our conduct is faultless. It is because we have accepted the

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salvation Jesus accomplished through His baptism and the Cross that we have obtained the remission of sins and become righteous. The purity of faith does not depend on my excellence but on the truth of salvation I rely on.

Also, the lampstand is joined together out of one piece of gold. Through this, learn the unity of the saints who have received the remission of sins through one gospel. Though people's personalities and the work entrusted to them differ, the foundation of salvation is one. Gathering together only outwardly while holding on to different ways of salvation is different from this unity. The righteous who believe together in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must become one body in the Lord. Regard as precious the brothers and sisters who have received the same salvation, and serve the gospel together with the church.

The flower-shaped bowls and the grace He keeps bestowing

On the lampstand there are decorations resembling flowers. The Bible text calls these bowls made *"like almond blossoms."* Since there are three on each of the six branches and four on the central shaft, the flower-shaped bowls are twenty-two in all. The lamps that give light are seven. Read the text distinguishing the bowl-shaped decorations on the branches and the shaft, the ornamental knobs and flowers connected with them, and the actual lamps.

Exodus records this shape, and through that shape we meditate on the life of the saints who have been saved. Looking at the bowls on each branch, think of the grace God keeps bestowing on the church and the saints. After remitting our sins,

the Lord does not leave us alone. To the church built on the salvation of Christ, the comfort of the word, the strength of faith, and the help to serve the gospel are supplied every day. It is not that we try to count a separate blessing for each bowl, but that we learn that grace is needed for every service of the saints.

We have received the remission of sins, but the difficulties of life may remain. Things may come to a standstill at work, our hearts may grow heavy over family problems, and we may lack the wisdom to carry out the work entrusted to us. At such times, do not leave the church or be discouraged alone, saying that your own strength has run out. Ask God, who saved us, for what you need. God supplies not only the comfort of the soul but also the actual help, wisdom, and material things needed to serve the gospel. Believe in the One who knows our needs and cares for us so that we can carry out the work of God.

When you pray, do not keep up appearances, but tell Him your circumstances of lack just as they are. Ask your brothers and sisters for prayer as well, and receive the guidance of the word. Even in the time of waiting for help in the midst of hardship, we come to learn the faith that relies on God. To help others with the grace we have received and to live asking again for the grace we need is the life inside the holy place. A person who has received grace does not boast that he serves the gospel because he is strong. He confesses that today too he can serve because the Lord holds him up.

Keeping the lamp of the gospel from evening until morning

Exodus 27:20–21 commands the people of Israel to bring pure oil of pressed olives for the light. Aaron and his sons had

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to tend the lamp before God from evening until morning, outside the veil before the ark of the Testimony. The expression *"tend"* in the Bible text means to look after and care for the lamp. Leviticus 24:1–4 also explains the service of arranging the lamps without ceasing.

The people bring the oil, and Aaron and his sons tend the lamps in the holy place. Not all the people went into the holy place and took on the same duty. Also, the expression *"continually"* must be read as meaning that the appointed service must continue. Exodus 30:7–8 speaks of arranging the lamps in the morning and lighting them in the evening. It does not mean that the fire was kept up by itself without care or trimming.

Look at this pure oil in connection with the Holy Spirit. To the person who has truly received the remission of sins, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift. There is no need to heat up one's feelings or to force some experience in order to receive the Holy Spirit. When we believe with our hearts in the remission of sins accomplished through the baptism and the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwells in that cleansed heart. The remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 must also be read within this salvation. The water baptism a believer receives after being saved is a sign showing his faith, and that rite itself does not remove sin.

The righteous in whom the Holy Spirit dwells must keep the lamp of the gospel. This is deeper than merely continuing the schedule of worship. We must preach it just as it is: that Jesus received baptism from John and bore the sin of the world, that He received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and that He rose again from death and accomplished salvation. If we leave out the baptism because the hearers dislike it, or change

the remission of sins into a story of worldly success in order to gather many people, the content of the light changes.

Just as the fire was lit with the pure oil God appointed, the church must preach the unmixed gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even as generations change, the truth of salvation does not change. Do not take hearing the word lightly because you already know it. To hear it repeatedly, believe it with the heart, and tell it accurately to the next person is the service of keeping the lamp. Though the service entrusted to each differs, all the saints must share in this responsibility.

The light shone by the righteous who have received the remission of sins

Through the lampstand of the holy place, let us look at the Church of God. The Church of God is the gathering of the righteous who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. A large building or long years of religious activity do not make a person one of God's people. One must first be saved from sin, and those who have received that salvation must gather together and deliver the light of life. Merely urging people to live good lives without having received the remission of sins cannot shine this light.

The foundation of our salvation is Jesus Christ. The Lord, who is God, came to this earth in the flesh of a man, and when He received baptism from John, who represented mankind, He had all the sin of the world passed on to Him. Remembering the passing on of sins through the laying on of hands on the sacrifices of the Old Testament, read Matthew 3:13–17. The Lord received baptism in order to fulfill all righteousness. And

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by bearing that sin and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He received in our place the judgment we were to receive. He who rose again from death is our eternal Savior.

The blue thread makes us think of the baptism by which He bore sin, the scarlet thread of the blood of the Cross, and the purple thread of the Lord, who is God and King. His having sin passed on to Him through baptism and His bearing the judgment through His blood form one salvation. 1 John 5:6–12 also speaks together of the witness of the water, the blood, and the Spirit, and of the life that is in the Son. When we read the ordinances for making the lampstand together with this word of salvation, the content of the light the church must deliver becomes clear.

In the sin of the world that the Lord bore, the sins of our whole lives are included. It is not that He dealt with only a part of the past and left the remaining sins for us to remove by our conduct and prayers. Because the Lord bore all sins and finished even their judgment, the person who believes in this salvation is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins before God. Do not stop at holding a vague expectation that you can obtain eternal life if you become better in the future. He who has the Son has life. We are children of God who have already received eternal life, and we have the hope of living with the Lord even after the death of the body and of taking part in the resurrection.

This status of the righteous must not be confused with saying that the flesh has become perfect. We can still have wrong thoughts, make mistakes, and hurt others. When we come to see a wrong, we must admit it before God and turn from it. However, it is not that each time we make salvation anew, but that we wash our hearts, believing in the baptism and blood of the Lord, who bore even that sin, and receive the

guidance of the word. The assurance of the remission of sins is not an excuse to take sin lightly but the foundation for honestly admitting our own wrongs and serving the Lord.

In the righteous who have received this salvation the Holy Spirit dwells, and He unites those who believe the same gospel within the church. Therefore salvation, the church, and the service of the gospel are not separate stories. Because the Lord delivered us from sin and placed us within the body of the Lord, we preach the remission of sins to the world together. The light the church shines is not the righteousness of the saints themselves but the righteousness of God that Jesus has completed.

The saints who support the flower of the gospel

In John 8:12, Jesus makes Himself known as the light of the world. Revelation 1:20 explains that the seven lampstands are the seven churches. The seven lamps on the one lampstand of Exodus and the seven lampstands of Revelation differ in the way they are described, but together they make us think of the mission of the church to reveal the Lord. That light belongs to the Lord, and the church stands in the place of delivering that light.

Look at the flowers and the ornamental knobs of the lampstand, the flower-calyxes that support the flowers from below. The flower makes us think of Jesus Christ and the salvation He accomplished, and the flower-calyx of the righteous who serve that gospel. Because the Lord first became the foundation of our salvation, we can stand as flower-calyxes. All the saints have been called to this service within the salvation they have already received. The pastor, the saints

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who believed before, and the person who has newly received the remission of sins are all people who support the gospel. The higher the office one obtains, the more one must care for the faith of more people rather than seek to be served.

The service of the flower-calyx involves actual labor. Preaching and teaching the word, making and distributing the books of the gospel, working faithfully in one's livelihood to provide the material things needed, and praying and caring for the saints together support the gospel. The learning of a student and the skills of a worker can also be directed toward this purpose. Whatever you do, set your heart so that the time, the body, and the talents the Lord has given are used for the benefit of the gospel. Do not put the exaltation of your own name ahead of other souls receiving the remission of sins.

For this, the faith that denies one's own thoughts is needed. Even after being saved, we can harbor thoughts that pursue only our own comfort and gain. If we insist on our own standards even while knowing that the word is right, it is hard to serve the gospel together. Admit your wrong thoughts before the word and turn your heart in the direction the Lord delights in. The experience of having yielded your heart yesterday cannot take the place of today's obedience. When the Holy Spirit leads through the word, receive that leading today as well.

Self-denial is not a matter of putting on an outward show of submission. It is knowing why one's own thoughts differ from the word and accepting with the heart that the word of God is right. Those who believed first must wait for and teach the young saints so that they understand this meaning. Faith does not grow merely by unconditionally granting every request. Comfort when comfort is needed, and correct a wrong direction

with the word. Remembering that you too stand by grace, support the faith of your brothers and sisters.

We cannot carry out this service to the end by our own strength alone. The Lord gives the grace and strength needed to the saints He uses as flower-calyxes. Rather than stepping back because you are lacking, ask for His help and begin the work entrusted to you. Even a small service is precious, and every member is needed. When we serve together with the gifts the Lord has given to each person, the flower of the gospel blooms and other souls come to see the light of life.

The word that renews the heart like wick-trimmers

In the words explaining the lampstand, wick-trimmers and trays made of pure gold also appear. Keeping the lamp burning required trimming. Through this scene, examine our hearts as we serve the gospel as well. When we do the same work for a long time, before we know it we can come to carry out the service we began in faith by habit and our own ability alone. Outwardly we continue the work, but our hearts can harden, and we can put forward only our past labors and not hear the word He gives today.

Just as a burnt wick is trimmed, such a heart must be renewed by the word. What we did well before or the position we held for a long time does not guarantee today's faith. Admit the stubbornness and helplessness God exposes through the word. When necessary, adjust together the work you are entrusted with and learn a new place to serve, and even when doing the same work, carry it out again in faith. When we return to the heart that knows the Lord must give grace, service becomes a work of living faith.

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Looking after one another's weariness is also important. Do not leave all the responsibility to the zeal of one person, but share prayer and actual labor. Even a person who is physically weak and cannot do much work can help the gospel by praying and sharing the word. This is serving together according to the strength and gifts received from the Lord. In that process, abandon the heart that looked only to its own gain, and ask that the gospel be preached to those who do not yet know the remission of sins.

The purpose for which the lampstand exists lies in shining light. God established the church, too, to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. Examine whether your words and labor today are directed toward this purpose. Preach step by step the salvation completed through the baptism and the Cross to those weighed down by guilt, and support those who have newly believed so that they grow within the word. Let us keep and serve this lamp of the gospel until the day the Lord comes again.

Across from the seven lamps of the holy place is the bread placed before God always. The righteous who shine the light need the food of faith every day. In the next chapter we will look at the table overlaid with gold and the twelve loaves, and learn the life that receives the word of life into the heart and responds to God in faith.

Questions for Reflection

1. Look at the lampstand made of one piece of pure gold and the seven lamps. What are the pure faith and the unity of the saints learned through this, and how was the remission of sins that is the foundation of that unity accomplished?

2. Connect the service of tending the lamp with pure oil to the church today. What responsibility goes with keeping the gospel without omitting any one of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus?

3. What thoughts of my own or old habits must I lay down in order to serve as a flower-calyx of the gospel? Decide on concrete things to do, receiving the guidance of the word, in using your time, talents, and material things and in sharing the labor of other saints. ✉

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Chapter 11

The bread placed before God always

Read Together Exodus 26:35 · John 6:29–35, 47–58 · Matthew 3:13–17; 13:18–23 · Hebrews 2:1–4

< Exodus 25:23–30 >

"You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around. You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that are at its four legs. The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold. And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always."

< Leviticus 24:5–9 >

"And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. And you shall put pure

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frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute."

The table placed across from the light

In the previous chapter we looked at the lampstand and the seven lamps on the south side of the holy place. Across from it, on the north side, is the table. God commanded that bread be placed on that table so that it would be before Him always. The light that illuminates the holy place and the bread placed before God belong to different furnishings and services, but both are within the order of worship God appointed among His people.

When we see a table, we think of the people who eat together. We recall the place where the family sits around it, and the food set out while waiting for someone. When we read about the table of showbread in the holy place, too, we can think of relationship and care. But first we must know how this table differs from ordinary dining furniture. God appointed its materials and measurements, and the bread placed on it was also prepared according to the appointed ordinance.

The name *"showbread"* may be unfamiliar to those hearing it for the first time. The showbread is the bread set out before God. Exodus 25:30 commands that this bread be placed before God always. Take to heart the word that the bread must remain in its place and that the service must continue.

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There is no need to read this as an explanation that God must receive food because He gets hungry like a person. The text does not depict a scene of God eating the bread. Rather, He has the bread placed before Him, and then appoints that the priests eat it. The table of showbread leads us to look together at the faith that eats the food of life God gives and the life of faith that a saved person offers before God.

The table of showbread made of acacia wood overlaid with gold

Exodus 25:23 commands that a table be made of acacia wood. Its length is two cubits, its width one cubit, and its height a cubit and a half. If, as in the earlier part of this book, we take one cubit as about 45 centimeters, it comes to about 90 centimeters in length, about 45 centimeters in width, and about 67.5 centimeters in height. This is an example of conversion to aid understanding, and it is better to remember the standard figures of the Bible in cubits.

The table is overlaid with pure gold, and a molding of gold is made all around it. On its four sides a frame of a handbreadth is made, and a gold molding is made around that frame as well. A handbreadth is not the same as a span measured with the fingers spread out. In this chapter we will not arbitrarily change this into a larger figure but read it according to the expression of the text. There is also no need to settle even the detailed way the frame is joined as if it were a finished drawing.

On the four corners that are at its four legs, rings of gold are attached, and poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold are put through those rings so that the table can be carried. Though it is a table placed before God, it was made so that it could be

moved on the journey through the wilderness. The making, the using, and even the moving are included in the command of God. If we look only at the splendor of the table overlaid with gold, it is easy to miss the labor of the people who actually lifted and carried this furnishing.

The dishes and pans, the pitchers and bowls for pouring that belong to the table are also made of pure gold. These names follow the Bible text of Exodus 25:29. They are vessels set apart for the service offered to God. Here we must not add to it by imagining all the tableware of a modern dining table. If we put chopsticks, which are not in the Bible, or an ordinary mealtime scene into the list of utensils, the recorded facts and our own life experience get mixed together.

Unlike the lampstand of the previous chapter, which was made of pure gold, the table of showbread is a structure of acacia wood overlaid with pure gold. Being in the same holy place and having the color of gold does not mean that the material and the method of making are the same as well. Reading small differences carefully is not a study that makes the Bible difficult. It is the process of hearing what God actually commanded.

We hear the ordinance of the twelve loaves in Leviticus

Exodus chapter 25 tells us how to make the table and where to place the bread on it. The detailed ordinance that twelve loaves must be made is to be read in Leviticus 24:5–9. When we open the two passages together, the command to make the table and the content of the service carried out at that table are connected. It is important not to think that all the explanation is

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contained in one passage, but to read by seeking out the places where it is recorded.

Leviticus commands that twelve cakes be baked with fine flour, with *"two-tenths of an ephah"* in each cake. It means that the amount of flour used for one cake is two-tenths of an ephah. The ephah is an ancient unit for measuring the quantity of grain. Here it is enough to remember the fact that there was a fixed amount for each cake, rather than calculating the exact modern weight. The materials and quantity of the bread did not vary according to the mood of the one serving or the amount of food left over.

The bread is set in two rows, six in a row, on the pure table before the LORD. In explaining this expression, there is no need to add, as if it were the command of the text, the thickness of the bread, the shape of a stand, or how many layers were stacked. On each row pure frankincense is put, as a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. An offering made by fire is an offering that is burned, and this passage is the ordinance of offering the frankincense placed with the bread as a memorial. Therefore it must not be understood that all twelve loaves were burned.

The number twelve reminds us of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moreover, the text says that this ordinance is related to an everlasting covenant for the children of Israel. So we can read the twelve loaves as a sign that makes us think of the whole people before God. However, Leviticus chapter 24 did not command that the name of a particular tribe be attached to each loaf. The representation of the people is an interpretation obtained by reading the number and the context of the covenant together.

When we think of the community as we look at the bread placed before God, we come to look back on whether our faith

has narrowed to a concern for ourselves alone. We pray earnestly for our own families and our own circumstances. At the same time we can remember before God the circumstances of other saints as well. When we take to heart the fact that even those who do not catch our eye are people who belong to God, our attitude toward those who worship with us can change.

Setting it anew every Sabbath and eating it in a holy place

Leviticus 24:8 commands that the bread be set in order before God every Sabbath. The word that it must be there *"continually"* does not mean that the same bread is placed once and left as it is forever. The service of setting it anew at the appointed time continues. Just as the tending of the lamps in the previous chapter was repeated, continual obedience was needed in preparing and placing the bread as well.

Then verse 9 tells us that the bread goes to Aaron and his sons, and that they must eat it in a holy place. The bread is explained as most holy among the offerings made to God. It was not food that ordinary people could go into the holy place and freely share. Only when we read together the place where the bread was set, who ate it, and where it was eaten can we understand the actual appearance of the service.

Through the eating of the bread in the holy place, learn that the saved saints, within the church, eat the word of life and live. This food is the word given to those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Not every gathering has the bread of life just because it has attached the name of a church to itself. Within the true church that preaches the salvation of the baptism and the Cross,

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the righteous eat the word and grow. Moral lessons alone cannot give life to the soul of a sinner, and with a faith that has not removed sin one cannot enjoy this food.

This is a typological explanation connecting the service of the holy place to the church today. Those actually appointed to eat the bread were Aaron and his sons. What we are to learn today is not to arbitrarily widen the number of persons in that ordinance, but the fact that the saints who have received the remission of sins must live, eating by faith the word God gives.

Setting the bread anew is closer to regular care than to a splendid event. While we long remember the impression received at a special meeting, we can easily take for granted the time of hearing the Word together every week. But the life of faith needs time for learning and remembering repeatedly. Even a word we have already heard, when we hear it again in different circumstances, makes us look back on what we are like and on the grace of God, both of which we did not realize last time.

There is no need to make this repetition merely a duty of fear. The bread placed before God is connected to the covenant with His people. Through the ordinance the people keep remembering the relationship in which they belong to God. We too, as we prepare for worship, can think again of whose word we hear and by whose grace we live, rather than looking back only on what results we produced during the week.

Believing with the heart in Christ, the bread of life

In John chapter 6, Jesus makes Himself known as the bread of life. The direct background of this word is the sign of the five loaves and two fish and the conversation about the manna

in the wilderness. It is not a scene in which He expounds the details of the ordinance of the showbread, but it is a word to be read together with it as we think of the life God gives. Jesus said that he who believes has eternal life, and promised that He would raise up at the last day whoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood.

To eat the Lord, the bread of life, is to believe with the heart in the salvation the Lord accomplished. To eat the flesh of Jesus is to believe that He, who came in the flesh of a man, received baptism from John and bore our sins, and to drink His blood is to believe that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Jesus bore the sin of the world and died, and rose again and became the eternal Savior. Accept this truth of salvation as salvation for yourself.

Baptism and the Cross must be believed together. With a faith that believes only in the blood of the Cross while excluding the baptism of Jesus, one cannot obtain the complete remission of sins. If we hold on only to the fact that He shed His blood on the Cross and still keep sin in our hearts without knowing how our sins were passed on to Jesus, we are not fully believing in the remission of sins. Do not push the baptism aside as an event unrelated to salvation. Because the Lord received baptism from John and bore all the sins of our whole lives, the judgment of the Cross that He received bearing those sins becomes the judgment for us. The Lord remitted all sins and made us who believe righteous.

Merely looking at the bread does not make it food for the body. Likewise, memorizing the explanation of the gospel well and believing it with the heart are different. Even if one can give the right answer when someone asks, deep in the heart one can still rely on one’s own conduct or daily prayers of repentance as what removes sin. We must not leave such a faith

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as it is and add the gospel of the water and the Spirit as knowledge. We must accept with the heart that only the salvation the Lord accomplished through His baptism and blood delivered me from sin.

The person who believes in this way already has eternal life. Eternal life is not a vague possibility whose outcome we will know only after death. In the heart that believes in the remission of sins the Lord has given, the Holy Spirit dwells, and the Lord becomes that person's life. We still live carrying the weakness of the flesh, but we live as children of God in the Lord. Because we believe this fact, we can admit our wrongs without hiding them and follow the word, relying on the salvation of the Lord, who bore even that sin.

Examine the meaning of connecting the eating of His flesh with the baptism of Jesus by reading Matthew 3:13–17 and John chapter 6 together. It is not that the word "baptism" itself appears in John chapter 6. Through the two passages we learn that believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished by coming in the flesh and through His baptism and the Cross is eating the bread of life. The rite of eating bread with the mouth does not itself produce the remission of sins. Obtain life by believing with the heart in what the Lord has accomplished.

The frame of the heart that keeps the faith of salvation

Looking at the frame around the table of showbread, learn the faith that holds on to the truth of salvation in the heart. If we understand the frame as a structure that supports the bread so that it does not fall off, we can think of the heart that does not let the gospel it has heard slip away. Exodus does not

directly interpret the spiritual meaning of the frame, but through this shape we can examine the attitude of faith. Hebrews 2:1–4 also warns us to give heed to the word we have heard and not to neglect so great a salvation.

Losing the truth of salvation is different from forgetting a trivial piece of knowledge. If we let the bread of life slip from our hearts, we depart from life. Do not feel secure merely because you have attended church for a long time and heard the gospel many times. One can become a person to whom the word is familiar but who does not hold on to it with the heart. If, when a trial comes or one's own shortcomings are exposed, one doubts the truth of the remission of sins and seeks another way of salvation, one must examine what one has been believing.

Read also the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:18–23. By the wayside the word is snatched away, on the stony places there is no root and one stumbles under tribulation and persecution, and among the thorns the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word. The good ground hears the word and understands it and bears fruit. Not all who have heard the word reach the same result. We too must not stop at the fact that we have heard, but receive the word of salvation deeply into our hearts.

For that, the boundary between before and after being saved must be clear. If before, while saying that you believed in Jesus, you kept sin in your heart and regarded yourself as a sinner, admit that with that faith you had not received the remission of sins. If now you have heard and believed the gospel that all your sin was passed on to Jesus through His baptism and its judgment was finished on the Cross, confess that through that salvation you have become righteous. The former wrong way of salvation and the gospel of the water and the Spirit you

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believe now must not be left mixed together as if they were similar things.

This boundary is not a matter of making up a date or a proud experience to put forward before people. It is a matter of looking back honestly on when and through what word you abandoned your wrong faith and accepted the Lord's salvation. If the point in the past is not clear, examine what you are relying on now. Distinguish the time when you knew it as knowledge from believing with the heart, and believe clearly now that only the Lord's baptism and blood have saved you from sin. The faith or judgment of other people cannot take the place of the faith of my own heart.

Even you who already believe, hold on to this gospel with your hearts every day. Hearing the word again is not in order to obtain salvation anew each time. It is in order to believe today also, as your life, in the salvation the Lord has completed, and to live by it. When you are discouraged because of your own failures, rely on the Lord, who bore even those sins, and when you want to boast of your own labors, remember the grace of the Lord. Do not abandon the assurance of the remission of sins, but with that faith admit your wrongs and turn from them.

If there is a part you do not know, open the Bible and ask and learn in detail. Do not pass it over by repeating the answers others give while not believing with your heart. Those who believed first must also look at which part the one who is learning does not understand. Since it is a matter of life, explain accurately and help him to hear it fully. To understand the word, believe it, and hold on to it in one's own heart is to set up the frame of faith.

The bread of faith offered before God

Looking at the bread placed before God, think also about what we offer to God as we live. The table of showbread, acacia wood overlaid with gold, makes us meditate on how weak people live by the faith that believes in God. There are many shortcomings in our flesh, but God delights in the heart that believes His word. Offering the bread of faith to God does not mean that God must eat food like a person. It means a life that believes in the salvation He accomplished, believes that He guides and cares for us even now, and responds with that faith.

Believing in the remission of sins is not the whole of learning the life of faith. We must rely on God, who saved us, in today's life as well. When there is a problem in the family or in your livelihood, or when you lack the wisdom or strength to do the work entrusted to you, ask God. When you entrust things to the Lord, beginning with small matters, and experience His help, faith grows. The person who prayed for his own problems comes to pray for his brothers and sisters, and to ask for greater things for the church and the preaching of the gospel. God delights in such faith that relies on Him.

Faith shared together with the church also belongs here. That we rely on the church does not mean that we regard the organization itself as having mysterious power. It is believing that the Lord is among the saved saints, guides them by the word, and hears the prayers offered together. Do not hold on only to your own judgment and endure alone, but receive the guidance of the word and join hearts with the saints. Learn the life of praying for and helping one another within the community God cares for.

God also cares for the daily life of the saints who serve the gospel. Tell Him the needs of your family and workplace, and

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believe that He will actually help. We are bound by worry and try to solve things by our own strength alone, but the Lord has wisdom and a way. Even in difficulty, believe in His time and His way and do the work entrusted to you faithfully. Confess with thanksgiving the help you have received, and use the material things gained in your livelihood and the skills you have learned in serving the gospel. The grace received from the Lord must lead again to service for other souls.

This faith also involves the labor of hands and feet. Do not say that you believe and then push everything that needs to be done onto others. Because we trust the Lord, we actually work, help, and give. A life of always offering the bread of faith before God is not a matter of repaying the price of salvation but the life of a child who has received grace living in reliance on the Father. The actual replacement of the bread in Leviticus took place every Sabbath, but the response of faith learned through that ordinance continues into our daily lives.

A life of eating the food together and delivering life

The saved saints eat the food of the word and grow within the church. When we confirm again the remission of sins and our hope, new strength arises in our hearts, and we come to see those who believe with us as the family of God. Remember that the same Holy Spirit dwells in our brothers and sisters as well. We must get out of the heart that lived only for our own families and our own problems, and tell God of the difficulties of other saints together and care for them.

Think also of how He had the table carried with the rings of gold and the poles overlaid with gold. Sharing the food of the word is not a matter of displaying one’s own ability alone. We

must first believe the truth of salvation ourselves, and preach the gospel united with the church that has the same faith. One person can explain the word, another can prepare the way to deliver it, and all can pray together and take on the necessary tasks. Through this service the food of life is delivered to those who do not yet know the remission of sins.

Explain step by step to a young saint so that he can understand. Do not think that repeating the terms you have long heard is enough, but help him to understand with his heart why the baptism of Jesus and the Cross must be believed together. Share the gospel also with the saints who already believe, and confirm the grace together. Eating the same word again is not a useless repetition but a life of living by the Lord.

This week, entrust one problem of your life to God, and pray together for the needs of other saints as well. As you hear the word, make clear what salvation you rely on, and embrace in your heart someone with whom to share the food you have received. Believing that God will help, carry out the service entrusted to your hands. The life of eating the bread the Lord gives and responding to Him in faith continues in this way in actual life.

Now, in the next chapter, we will look at the altar of incense in the holy place. We, who have become righteous through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, eat the word of life and pray with the faith that God hears us. From the place where we learned the bread placed before God always, we will go on to the incense and the word of prayer offered up to Him.

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Questions for Reflection

1. What is the actual ordinance of setting out and eating the twelve loaves? Explain, distinguishing between them, the food of the word and the life of faith offered to God that we learn through this ordinance.

2. How does knowing the baptism of Jesus and the Cross as knowledge differ from believing them with the heart? By what have I received the remission of sins? Can you clearly distinguish the faith you formerly knew only as knowledge from the salvation you now believe with your heart?

3. Apply to your life the meaning of offering the bread of faith to God. Decide on one problem of family or livelihood to entrust to the Lord, and one way to serve the gospel by praying and laboring together with the church. ✉

Chapter 12

The prayer offered at the altar of incense

Read Together Matthew 3:13–17 · 1 John 5:6–8, 14–15 · Exodus 40:26–27 · Leviticus 16:12–13 · Psalm 141:2 · Luke 1:8–10 · Hebrews 4:14–16; 9:1–7 · Revelation 5:8; 8:3–4

< Exodus 30:1–10 >

"You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length and a cubit its width—it shall be square—and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides. You shall place them on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. 'Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it. And Aaron shall make atonement upon

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its horns once a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonement; once a year he shall make atonement upon it throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.'"

< Exodus 30:34–38 >

"And the LORD said to Moses: 'Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the LORD. Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.'"

The people who have heard the word speak to God

In the previous chapter we looked at the bread placed before God always. Now we will look at another furnishing of the holy place, the altar of incense. The person who hears the word and lives by it also needs to tell God his circumstances and his wishes. The ordinance of the altar of incense makes us think of this prayer.

There are times when we stop speaking as we are about to pray. What we need is clear, but we do not know how to tell Him, and sometimes the wrongs we have already repeated many times come to mind and it is hard to open our mouths. What is the reason I can draw near before God? Is it because

the sentences of my prayer are excellent, or because I have endured long and labored much? Reading about the altar of incense, we come to look first at God, who receives prayer, and at the grace He has prepared.

Exodus chapter 30 tells us the shape and position of the altar of incense, the times for burning incense, and the ordinances for its use. The altar of incense is placed facing the mercy seat, where God said He would meet with them. To examine the way of prayer by which we draw near to God, we must first know the atonement He has prepared. Before examining how earnest your heart is, engrave on your heart the kind of salvation by which God has made you one of His people.

In the holy place there is the lampstand, there is the table of showbread, which makes us think of the food of the word, and there is the altar of incense, on which incense is burned before God. Prayer is also needed in the life in which the saints who have received the remission of sins eat the word within the Church of God and live by faith. Knowing the word does not mean that every need is filled by itself. The strength to serve the Lord, the grace by which He holds up a weak heart, and the way to preach the gospel must all be asked of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins calls God Father and asks for help. The remission of sins is not a matter of obtaining the qualification to live alone without any relationship with God. Even the person who has received the grace of salvation needs grace to live today. Examining the altar of incense, learn the faith that does not hide that need but brings it to God.

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The small golden altar placed before the veil

The altar of incense faces the mercy seat from outside the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony. In Exodus 40:26, too, Moses puts the gold altar before the veil inside the tabernacle of meeting. When we read the two passages together, we can see that the altar of incense was placed not beside the ark inside the Most Holy Place but in the place that faces the inner veil from the holy place side. The veil stands between the altar of incense and the ark of the Testimony.

The altar of incense is made of acacia wood. Its length and width are 1 cubit each, and its height is 2 cubits. Its base is square, and its shape rises tall. If we take 1 cubit as 45 centimeters, as in the previous chapters, its width and depth come to about 45 centimeters, and its height to about 90 centimeters. These converted values are examples for picturing the size, and the measurements the text records are in cubits.

Its top, its sides, and its horns are overlaid with pure gold, and a molding of gold is made around it. The horns are made in one piece with the altar. Under the molding, on both its sides, two gold rings are made as holders for the poles with which to carry it, and the poles are also made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. Even a furnishing that was small and close at hand had to be handled according to the shape and use God had appointed.

In Hebrews 9:4 the golden censer appears. A censer is a vessel that holds fire and incense, and it is distinguished from the altar of incense. In Leviticus chapter 16 the high priest goes inside the veil with a censer and incense. Do not confuse this service with the position where the altar of incense was set up. The place of the altar of incense, as Exodus chapters 30 and 40 tell us, is on the holy place side, before the veil.

With the veil between them, the altar of incense faces the mercy seat. The person who offers prayer must also look at the Lord, who saved him. If we put forward only our own zeal apart from the grace of salvation, the basis of our prayer is shaken. Looking at the gold that covers the altar of incense, engrave on your heart the faith that believes in God. What we need is the faith that accepts just as it is what God has accomplished and relies on Him.

The holy service continued morning and evening

Aaron burns incense in the morning when he tends the lamps, and he also burns incense in the evening when he lights the lamps. The service of caring for the light and the service of burning incense are placed together within the flow of the day. It was not that incense was burned briefly only on a day when something special happened; it was a service to be continued before God throughout their generations.

The text commands that this incense not cease. Reading that word, we can look back on where prayer stands in our daily lives. We examine whether we seek God hurriedly only after things get blocked, and forget Him when our circumstances improve. The ordinance of burning incense morning and evening makes us meditate on the continuity of a life that relies on God. There is no need to turn this into a rule for the saints of today that a fixed number of prayers must be completed in order to be answered.

At the same time, what must not be done at the altar of incense is also fixed. They must not offer strange incense on it, nor offer a burnt offering or a grain offering, nor pour a drink offering on it. Not every offering could be placed in one place

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merely on the grounds that it was offered to God. The altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense are both holy furnishings, but each has its own use.

This distinction makes us think of sincerity in worship. We sometimes think that if our zeal is great, God should accept whatever we do. But the person who serves God hears His word and responds. Zeal must follow the word, and devotion must go together with a heart that fears God.

The duty of burning incense and the prayer of all the people must also be distinguished. In Luke chapter 1, while the priest Zacharias is burning incense in the holy place, the people pray outside. The fact that the priest was entrusted with the duty of burning incense does not mean that others could not pray to God. We can see the service of the holy place and the prayer of the people being directed toward God together.

We do not take lightly the incense that belongs to God

Exodus 30:34–38 tells us how to make the incense. Stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense are mixed in equal amounts, made according to the art of the perfumer, and salted so as to be pure and holy. He has some of it beaten very fine and put before the ark of the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting, where God will meet with them.

It is not that we can understand this passage only if we connect all the unfamiliar names of spices to today's product names. What we should examine first is the fact that God appointed the materials and the blending, and set it apart as holy incense for Himself. An explanation that assigns a

particular kind of prayer to each spice is not written in this verse itself.

The anointing oil, which appears in the earlier part of the same chapter, must also be distinguished from this incense. The anointing oil is the oil applied to set apart as holy the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the priests. It differs from the incense to be burned in its materials and use. If we explain the anointing oil as if it were mixed in as a material of the incense, we miss the meaning of the two ordinances. God appointed separately the oil to be applied and the incense to be burned.

He also does not let anyone make anything like this incense to enjoy its smell personally. He adds a stern warning as well for the person who violates this. What is holy is not a possession to be used as I want but something that belongs to God. Respecting the will of the One who set the incense apart came before appreciating the beauty of the incense.

When we apply this to prayer, we can learn the same heart. Prayer easily becomes a tool for showing my piety to others. We may pick out fine expressions to display ourselves, or demand that God approve our plans. But prayer toward God holds the attitude of wanting to hear His will. Reading the ordinance of the incense that belongs to God, we come to examine toward whom our hearts and lips are directed.

The Bible connects incense with the prayers of the saints

The basis for connecting the altar of incense with prayer is not only the image of incense rising upward. Psalm 141:2 prays like this.

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"Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

The psalmist asks that his prayer be like incense offered before God. The wish directed toward God, who receives prayer, is expressed in the form of burning incense. This word opens a biblical way to read incense and prayer in connection with each other.

Revelation 5:8 shows golden bowls full of incense and explains that the incense is the prayers of the saints. In 8:3–4, the incense rises before God together with the prayers of the saints. This scene showing the worship of heaven engraves on our hearts the fact that the prayer offered toward God is set before Him.

These words make us look at the prayers of the saints through the burning of incense. The prayer God receives is the prayer offered by faith by the people who have received the remission of sins. In the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit the Holy Spirit dwells, and He leads him to believe the word of God and to ask for what the Lord delights in. The starting point of prayer lies in this relationship established with God.

For the person who prays, this is a comfort. Even the worries we could not make known to people we can tell to God. Even a short supplication offered for another person has meaning before God. What sustains us is not whether anyone recognizes our prayer, but the faith that God is listening.

Prayer continues in the places of daily life as well. Even while doing housework or working, tell Him your shortcomings, and ask for help for the church and for others. If prayer is unfamiliar to you, learn by praying together with the saints. Prayer is not a work entrusted only to those who can

skillfully say special words, but an expression of faith that a person who relies on God learns as he lives.

We draw near to God with the assurance of the remission of sins

At the altar of incense there is an ordinance about blood as well as incense. Exodus 30:10 commands that Aaron make atonement once a year upon the horns of the altar of incense with the blood of the sin offering. The daily service of burning incense and the atonement performed once a year are different ordinances, but they show that the service offered before God is not separated from atonement. Standing before a holy altar does not make a person's sins disappear by themselves. There must be the atonement God has appointed.

We too, when we draw near before God, must first ask ourselves. What do I believe in that I call God Father? How have my sins been removed? When Jesus came to this earth and received baptism from John, He bore our sins. On the Cross, by shedding His blood and dying in the body that bore those sins, He received the judgment of sin in our place. Jesus, who rose again from death, is our Savior. By believing in this salvation we receive the remission of sins and call God Father.

Believe in the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross as one. If we leave out the baptism and hold on only to the Cross, we do not know how our sins were passed on to Jesus, and each time we do wrong we try to solve that sin again ourselves. The sins the Lord bore through His baptism are not only the sins up to the time we first believed. They are all the sins we commit throughout our lives. The Lord, who bore those

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sins, received even their judgment in full on the Cross. Our prayer must stand on this completed salvation.

God is not One who receives the prayer of a person who leaves his sins as they are. The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has the qualification to call God Father and ask of Him. That qualification does not arise because one speaks well or holds a high position in the world. It was given because Jesus removed sins. In the saved person the Holy Spirit dwells, and that person, as a child of God, asks the Father for the grace he needs.

Therefore, each time you are about to pray, do not look for your qualification in your own deeds. If you think God will hear you because today you were better than others, then tomorrow, when you do wrong, you will not be able to open your mouth. The basis for drawing near to God is not my easily changeable record of daily living but the eternal atonement the Lord accomplished. Make this fact clear in your heart and draw near to God.

We admit our wrongs and believe again in the salvation we have received

Even though we have received the remission of sins, we are weak. We sometimes put only our own will first, hurt people, and reveal a heart that loves the things of the world more than God. At such times we must not treat what we did wrong as if it had never happened. Admit before the word what you did wrong. If we cover our own wrongs with the words that we have received the remission of sins, our hearts cannot be directed toward God.

At the same time, we must not think that the salvation Jesus accomplished has been nullified because of that wrong. Even the sin I discovered today is included in the sin of the world the Lord bore when He received baptism. He received the judgment of that sin, too, on the Cross. While honestly admitting your own weakness, believe that the Lord has removed even that sin. This is the way a person who has received the remission of sins washes away the darkness of his heart and draws near to God again.

We are not people who obtain a new atonement each time by repeating prayers of repentance. We are people who accept into our hearts by faith the atonement He has already accomplished. Lord, I tried to live according to my own will. I believe that You bore even this wrong and were judged for it. Thank You for saving me. Now hold my heart and give me the strength to follow Your will. Tell Him like this, keeping your own wrong and the Lord's salvation together in your heart.

Even when you do not feel like praying, ruminate first on the word of salvation. Think over one by one, by faith, the facts that Jesus became a man for you, received baptism, died on the Cross, and rose again. When the assurance that the Lord has made you His child is established, thanksgiving arises, and in thanksgiving we can tell Him what we need. Practice in your daily prayer this flow of confirming the faith of the remission of sins, giving thanks, and asking.

God does not demand splendid expressions in order to hear our words. Tell Him what you need just as it is. If your heart has been taken by the world, ask Him to hold your faith, and if you lack the strength to serve the Lord, ask for strength. If you have done wrong to someone, admit that wrong and ask also for the heart and the wisdom to set the relationship right. Prayer is not an excuse for avoiding our wrongs but the place

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where we go forward, believing in the grace of salvation, in order to follow the will of God.

Even after being saved we need grace every day

Hebrews 4:14–16 urges us to draw near relying on Jesus, the great High Priest.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Jesus is One who knows our weakness. Because the Lord, who is God, became a man and came to this earth, He is not One who does not know our circumstances. Tell your shortcomings to the Lord, who knows hunger, weariness, and pain. The person who draws near to the throne of grace is not a person who needs no help, but a person who asks for help from the Lord, who knows him.

Do not stop praying on the grounds that you have received the remission of sins. Even though we have received the grace of being saved, we need grace to live today. Ask God for help with your livelihood, health, and family difficulties, and for the wisdom and strength to carry out your work. There is no reason to be ashamed of coming with small needs. The Father knows the circumstances of His children, and we are people who ask for the Father's help.

Prayer must not become a method hurriedly taken out only when a difficulty arises. Think of the incense that did not cease morning and evening. On busy days, on days when things go smoothly, and at the time of rest after finishing the day, rely on the Lord. If there is something to ask for repeatedly, keep telling Him, and if there is help you have received, give thanks.

Fellowship with God does not end with the memory of the one time when you were saved.

Also, our prayer must widen beyond our own circumstances. Pray that those who do not yet know the gospel may be saved, that the church may stand on the word, and that the workers may keep their faith and carry out the work entrusted to them. Pray also for the saints far away and for the places where the gospel is being preached. The Holy Spirit leads our hearts to the work of God. With the lips that told of our own needs, we now also tell of the salvation of other souls and the needs of the church.

Those who pray together are also workers who serve the gospel

The altar of incense had gold rings and poles. God had this holy furnishing carried on their shoulders. Seeing that service, learn that prayer, too, is a work to be taken on and served together. The work of the church is not accomplished only by those who do the visible work. The person who asks God for grace for that work is also a person who serves together.

Even a person who is physically weak and cannot go to far places can pray for the gospel. Even a person who cannot give much materially can hear the needs of the workers and tell them to God. Do not step back saying that there is nothing you can do. Take on the work of God together through prayer. To remember someone's name and pray for the gospel he preaches and the souls he meets is practical service.

If it is hard to pray alone, learn by praying together with the saints. As you hear the supplications of others, you come to know the needs of the church, and you too come to embrace

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those needs in your heart. As we hear the word together and ask together, the heart that held on only to its own thoughts is loosened. Gain the strength of prayer within the word and the fellowship God gives through the church.

It is not that one may leave the church and live alone just because one has the assurance of salvation. Our faith continually needs the food of the word, and it needs the fellowship in which we hold one another up when we become weak. If we look only at our own circumstances, prayer easily becomes a repetition of worries. When we eat the word and join hearts with the saints, we come to ask looking at what the Lord will accomplish.

We ask in faith, wait, and act

If you have asked of God, believe that He has heard. If, as soon as you finish praying, you think as though there will be no help at all, your heart is again bound only to your own strength and calculations. God is living and hears the prayers of His children. Remember what you have told Him, watch how He opens the way, and wait for the answer.

But you must not insist that only the time and way you have decided on are the answer. 1 John 5:14–15 tells us of the confidence of asking according to the will of God. Even when the answer feels slow, do not judge that God has abandoned you. While asking honestly for what you need, believe in the Lord's will and His time. That waiting, too, is the life of faith.

While you wait, do the work entrusted to you. Asking in faith is not a matter of making no preparation and sitting with folded hands. If you have asked for a way to preach the gospel, prepare the word you will preach, and if you have asked for the

wisdom to carry out a necessary task, examine the work given to you and do your best. If you have prayed for the people you will work with, look after their labor as well. Because we believe that God will help, we prepare and move.

We must pray so that we do not forget, while absorbed in work, the purpose of serving the gospel. Whether it is work for a living or the service of the church, when the work itself takes up the whole heart, it is easy to lose sight of what we are laboring for. Ask the Lord to hold your heart, and carry out in faith the work God has entrusted to you. When the strength you need is given and the way is opened, do not boast only of your own ability but give thanks to God.

What we are to learn before the altar of incense is the life of calling God Father and living with the faith of the remission of sins. Admit your wrongs and believe again in the salvation the Lord accomplished. Give thanks and ask for the grace you need, and join hearts with the saints and serve the gospel. After asking, wait for the will of God and do the work entrusted to you today. God has given the way of prayer so that His saved people may live in this way, relying on grace every day.

The altar of incense faced the mercy seat from before the veil. In the next chapter we will look at the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat inside that veil, and learn more deeply by what atonement God meets us and leads us by His word.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do the position of the altar of incense, the burning of incense morning and evening, and the yearly atonement for its horns each tell us? Explain the difference between the

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altar of incense and the censer, and between the daily service and the yearly atonement.

2. When it is hard to pray after having done wrong, what must we admit and what must we believe again? Examine how the baptism and the Cross of Jesus and the remission of the sins of a whole lifetime lead to thanksgiving and boldness in prayer.

3. What must I ask for today for myself, for the church, and for other souls? Decide what to pray for together, and what to actually prepare or do while waiting for the answer. ✉

Chapter 13

The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat, the place where God meets us

Read Together Exodus 16:32–34; 40:20–21 · Numbers 17:1–10 · Deuteronomy 10:1–5 · 1 Kings 8:9 · Matthew 3:13–17 · John 6:48–58 · Romans 8:1–2 · Hebrews 9:1–14; 10:9–25

< Exodus 25:22 >

"And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel."

< Leviticus 16:11–16 >

"And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself. Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil. And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die. He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the

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mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness."

The promise of meeting heard from inside the veil

The altar of incense we looked at in the previous chapter faced the mercy seat from before the veil. Now we will look at the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat inside the veil. This was not a place the people of that time went in and out of freely. Leviticus chapter 16 strictly fixes even the entry of the high priest.

The word "ark" is unfamiliar to us, but basically we can think of a box in which things are put. Into this ark is put the Testimony that God gives. That is why it is called the ark of the Testimony. Other places in the Bible also use the name "the ark of the covenant." It is also called by the familiar name "the Ark of the Law," but what we should remember before any name is the fact that inside it is the word that bears witness to the covenant of God.

Exodus chapter 25 explains the ark first among the various furnishings of the tabernacle. We have read in the order of coming in from the court toward the inside so as to examine the structure of the tabernacle in turn, but the Bible's command for

its making begins with this ark. After saying that He would dwell among His people, God commands the ark that will hold His Testimony and the mercy seat above it.

God wants to dwell together with His people. But how can a person who has sin be together with the holy God? The law reveals our sins and announces the judgment on sin. While giving that law, God also prepared the way of the tabernacle and the sacrifices. He does not leave sinners as they are but washes away their sins with the sacrificial offering, intending to meet them as His own people.

In the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat this will appears together. Inside the ark are the tablets of stone on which the law of God is written, and above it is the mercy seat, on which the blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled. God said that He would meet Moses at the mercy seat and give him the word to command the people. The law and atonement, meeting and the word, are not separate stories. They are the work of God, who makes sin known, removes sin, and teaches the saved people how they must live.

The ark overlaid with gold and the mercy seat made of pure gold

The ark of the Testimony is made of acacia wood and overlaid inside and out with pure gold. Its length is 2.5 cubits, its width 1.5 cubits, and its height also 1.5 cubits. A molding of gold is made around its upper edge, and four rings of gold are attached at its four feet. There are two rings on one side and two rings on the other side. Poles made of acacia wood are overlaid with gold and put through the rings, so that the ark may be carried by those poles.

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If we take 1 cubit as 45 centimeters, the length is about 112.5 centimeters, and the width and height are each about 67.5 centimeters. These are converted values for understanding the size, and the measurements the text records are in cubits.

The mercy seat is the cover placed on top of that ark. The text commands that the mercy seat be made of pure gold, and tells us that its length is 2.5 cubits and its width 1.5 cubits. It is the same length and width as the top of the ark. But it does not record the thickness or height of the mercy seat itself. We must not explain the height of the ark, 1.5 cubits, as the thickness or height of the mercy seat.

There are also times when we hear an explanation that calls the whole ark the mercy seat. But in the command for their making, we must distinguish the wooden box overlaid with gold from the cover of pure gold. The rings are attached to the ark, and the mercy seat is placed on top of the ark.

God says to leave the poles for carrying it in the rings and not to take them out. Not only the making of the ark but also the carrying of it must follow the word of God. Later in this chapter we will look further, through this ordinance, at the faith that serves and preaches the salvation we have received as something precious.

God, who speaks from between the two cherubim

At the two ends of the mercy seat are two cherubim made of hammered gold. Cherubim are beings that appear in the Bible in connection with the holy presence of God. The text commands that the two cherubim be joined to the mercy seat, that they stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat,

and that their faces be toward the mercy seat, facing one another.

Exodus 25:22, which we read above, tells of the promise of meeting and the promise of the word together. The direct recipient of this promise is Moses. The word Moses hears is not a secret for himself alone but the command of God to be told to the people.

Meeting God is not decided by an experience in which my heart becomes especially warm. The person who believes in the atonement God has appointed draws near before Him. We must not try to obtain only emotion while leaving sin unsolved. The blood on the mercy seat shows that the price of sin has been paid. God meets with and speaks to the people who have received the remission of sins through the salvation He Himself has prepared.

The person who has received the grace of the remission of sins lives following the guidance of the word. Believe in the salvation accomplished by the baptism and the Cross of Jesus, and follow the word of the Lord rather than your own feelings. Looking to God, who promised to give the word for the people at the mercy seat, listen to His will today as well. The grace of meeting God leads to a life that treasures and listens to His word.

We read about the things in the ark by examining the time of each record

When explaining the ark of the Testimony, people commonly speak of the tablets of stone, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. This is because Hebrews 9:4 mentions these three. The *"tablets of the covenant"* in the

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Bible text are the stone tablets of the covenant explained here. But not all three things appear in the command for their making in Exodus chapter 25. We must examine what scene each of the various passages explains.

Exodus 25:16 and 21 command that the Testimony God will give be put into the ark. Exodus 40:20 records that Moses put the Testimony into the ark. Deuteronomy 10:1–5 recalls that after the first tablets of stone were broken, the two tablets of stone he received again were put into the ark. These are records in which the ark and the word of the covenant are directly connected.

Manna is the food that makes us remember the grace of God, who fed the people in the wilderness. Exodus 16:32–34 says that an omer of manna was put in a pot to be kept for their descendants, and that it was laid up before the LORD and before the Testimony. This passage does not directly say that the pot was made of gold or that it was put inside the ark. We read about the golden pot and the list of things inside the ark in the explanation in Hebrews.

Numbers chapter 17, concerning Aaron's rod, records the sign that made known the man God had chosen. They had twelve rods brought according to the fathers' houses of Israel, and on the rod representing Levi, Aaron's name was written. The next day buds, blossoms, and fruit appeared on Aaron's rod. God had it kept before the ark of the Testimony as a sign to put an end to the complaints.

On the other hand, 1 Kings 8:9, which records the time of the dedication of Solomon's temple, states clearly that there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone. Hebrews chapter 9, explaining the tabernacle of the first covenant, lists together the golden pot, the rod, and the tablets of the covenant. Therefore we cannot conclude that the three things were always

inside the ark in the same state from beginning to end. These passages do not go so far as to explain when and what was moved.

The Book of the Law in Deuteronomy 31:26 is a separate object commanded to be put beside the ark of the covenant. We must not confuse it with the two tablets of stone inside the ark. In this way, if we distinguish the expressions 'inside,' 'before,' and 'beside,' and the time of each record, we can learn the meaning of the things that make us remember the word, the food, and the duty of the priest, while keeping to the range of what the Bible has said.

The place of atonement, where there are the cloud of incense and blood

Exodus tells us of the making of the mercy seat and the promise of meeting, and Leviticus chapter 16 explains the rite performed there on the Day of Atonement. Even Aaron the high priest cannot go inside the veil at any time as he pleases. He himself also needs atonement, and he must follow the preparation and procedure God has commanded.

In Leviticus 16:11 Aaron first kills the bull of the sin offering for himself and his house. Then he puts fire from the altar before the LORD into a censer, fills both hands with incense beaten fine, and brings it inside the veil. When he burns the incense before God, its cloud comes to cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the Testimony. The text connects this with Aaron's not dying.

The next procedure is recorded like this.

"He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before

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the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times" (Leviticus 16:14).

The place where the text specifies the number of times, seven, is before the mercy seat. If we explain 'on the mercy seat' and 'before the mercy seat' without distinguishing them, all in the same words, the procedure becomes blurred. Here is the reason to look carefully even at short expressions of position when reading the Bible.

The blood of the goat of the sin offering for the people is also brought inside the veil. Aaron sprinkles it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat, as he did with the blood of the bull. Verse 16 explains that he makes atonement for the Holy Place because of the uncleanness of Israel and the transgressions they have committed, and that he does so also for the tabernacle of meeting, which is among the unclean people. Atonement does not stop at setting an individual's heart at ease but touches the matter of the holy God and the people being together.

At this point we must distinguish the goat whose blood is brought in from the live goat that is later sent away into the wilderness. The laying on of both hands and the confession of all the sins in Leviticus 16:21 are performed on the live goat. We must not read as if that procedure were combined with the earlier sprinkling of blood and all performed on one goat. The whole of the Day of Atonement will be dealt with in detail in chapter 16. Here let us keep in our hearts the fact that the cloud of incense and the blood of the sacrifice were needed to draw near before the mercy seat.

God, who gave the law, also gave the way of atonement

The mercy seat is the place where God bestows the grace of the remission of sins, and in the sense of the place where He bestows grace, it is also called the throne of grace. The tablets of stone beneath it testify of the law God gave to His people. When we stand before that word, what we must do toward God and what we must do toward our neighbor are revealed, and the sins of not having lived according to that will are also revealed.

Do not take lightly the fact that God has commanded. Even a wrong that other people have not seen is sin before the word of God. Even if we think we are decent people ourselves, we cannot keep the law perfectly and make ourselves righteous. God's judgment on sin does not disappear according to our thinking. We must admit before the word that we are sinners.

To save us, such as we are, God gave the way of atonement. It is not that He pretends not to see sin or cancels His own law to accept us. He passed sin on to the sacrificial offering and had that offering pay the price of sin. Looking at the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat, look at both the justice and the love of God. For sin there is judgment, and to save the sinner a sacrifice to be offered in his place has been prepared.

Engrave on your heart the fact that the mercy seat covered the ark that held the tablets of stone of the law. It is not that the law has disappeared. The grace that solves the sin of having broken the law has been given. We acknowledge that the law of God is right, and we believe in the atonement of the Lord, who saved us, who are sinners before that law. Through the law we come to know sin, and through the salvation God has prepared we receive the remission of sins.

Romans 8:1–2 proclaims the liberation given in Christ.

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"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).

The law of the Spirit of life has made us free, who were under the law of sin and death. It is not a liberation obtained by fulfilling the demands of the law with our own deeds. It is the grace received by believing in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. Looking at the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat together, keep clearly in your heart the law, which reveals sin, and the grace of God, which saves the sinner.

Jesus, who is God, became our sacrificial offering

The sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament make us look to Jesus Christ, who would save us. Jesus is not merely a person more excellent than we are. The Lord, who is God, came to this earth in the body of a man to save sinners. The One who made us became our Savior. He is our King, and the eternal High Priest, who opened the way to draw near to God.

It is not that Jesus only said that He had come to save and then died. He Himself bore our sins and received their judgment. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on to the offering by laying hands on it, Jesus received the sin of mankind on His own body by being baptized by John. Engrave on your heart the baptism that fulfills all righteousness, which Matthew 3:13–17 tells us. Because our sins were passed on to Jesus, He was hung on the Cross as the Lamb who bore the sin of the world.

The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat, the place where God meets us

The blood of the Cross testifies that the Lord, who bore sin, was judged in our place. It is not that the sinless Lord died for no reason. Because He received our sins through His baptism, He paid the price of those sins with His own life. Jesus rose again from death and became our Savior. Believe as one salvation that God became a man, that He bore sin through His baptism, and that He was judged on the Cross and rose again.

This news of salvation is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Believing only in the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus is not believing fully in the truth of the remission of sins. If I do not believe the fact that my sins were passed on to the Lord, then each time I do wrong, I still bear that sin myself. Believe according to the word how the Lord bore and removed your sins. The baptism and the Cross cannot be separated.

The remission of sins is not a word that makes us feel good for a moment. It is the salvation the Lord actually accomplished. Having one's heart set at ease because someone says it is all right is different from having one's sins remitted. Our assurance does not lie in people's comfort or in our own deep emotion. It lies in the fact that Jesus bore sin and even received its judgment. The person who believes in that salvation with his heart draws near to God.

The once-for-all atonement includes the sins of a whole lifetime

Hebrews 9:12 proclaims the atonement of Christ like this.

"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).

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The high priest of the Old Testament performed the service of the Day of Atonement every year, but Jesus accomplished eternal atonement with His own sacrifice. Hebrews 10:14 also testifies of that completion.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

Do not limit the sins the Lord bore to the sins of the past only. When Jesus received baptism, He bore the sins of our whole lifetime. Not only the sins we have already committed but also the sins we will commit in the future through weakness are included in the sin of the world. Because He received the judgment of those sins in full on the Cross, the atonement of the Lord is eternal. It is not that He remitted only the sins before we first believed and left the sins after that for us to solve.

Nor is it that after receiving the remission of sins our deeds must become perfect little by little until at last we become people without sin. Being sanctified by faith is what the Lord accomplished with one offering. The fact that we have lived the life of faith for a long time, or our own self-discipline, cannot add anything to that salvation. We believe in the salvation that has already been accomplished perfectly, and we learn the word and live by that grace.

That does not mean, however, that our flesh no longer does wrong. Even the person who has received the remission of sins is lacking and must continue to be ruled by the word. The assurance of eternal atonement and the heart that admits one's own wrongs must be together. Cast away both the thought that it is all right to do wrong because the Lord has removed sin, and the thought that the salvation of the Lord has disappeared again because we did wrong. Admit your weakness, but place the basis of salvation in the Lord.

Hebrews 9:14 says that the sacrifice of Christ cleanses the conscience so that we may serve the living God. Eternal atonement is not a grace that leaves us to live irresponsibly. It is the grace that enables the person who could not draw near to God, being pressed down by sin, to serve the Lord with a clean conscience.

We learn the life of the Lord from the manna and the rod that budded

If the tablets of stone make us remember the law of God, the manna makes us think of the food of life with which God fed the people. The Israelites in the wilderness could not live by providing food for themselves. They had to eat the manna God gave. Our hearts, too, having been saved, need the word of God every day.

In John chapter 6 Jesus makes Himself known as the bread of life. The fathers who ate the manna in the wilderness also died, but the life the Lord gives is eternal. We must eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus by faith. Believing that the Lord received baptism on His own body and bore our sins is the faith that eats His flesh, and believing that He shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment of sin is the faith that drinks His blood. Our life is in the Lord, who bore sin and was judged for us.

Do not treasure this gospel only when you first hear it and then try to fill your heart with other food afterward. Even if the knowledge of the world increases, it cannot wash away the sins of the soul. The life of the heart does not come from holding on to the words and doctrines of men. When I hear the word of how the Lord saved me and reflect on it by faith, my heart

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regains its strength. Continue the life of eating the word within the church.

Aaron's rod that budded was a sign showing that God had chosen Aaron. On a rod that had no life God brought forth buds, blossoms, and fruit. In this sign look to Jesus, the eternal High Priest, and His resurrection life. Jesus bore our sins and died, but He did not remain in death. The Lord, who has risen, is our Savior even now.

The resurrection of the Lord does not end with the news that He alone has risen. We who have been saved also hope for the eternal life and the resurrection of the body that the Lord gives. Even though today's flesh is weak and cannot escape death, the Lord, who saved us, makes us live. Believe in Jesus, who is our King, our Prophet, and our High Priest. The Lord, who gives us the word, life, and the hope of resurrection, is our everything.

We often ruminate on the accomplished atonement in daily life

We are not people who live alone. We have family and neighbors, and there are the saints who hear the word and work together with us. As we live together, we hurt one another, insist on our own way, and are also hurt in heart by what the other person says. Having received the remission of sins does not mean that these wrongs of daily life disappear by themselves. We must look back on our present life before the law God has given.

Think again of the fact that the tablets of stone are beneath the mercy seat. Even though we have received the grace of atonement, the word of God is still with us. We must examine

before the word what we have loved more than God and what wrong we have done to other people. If we hold on to the thought that we are always right and only the other person is wrong, we do not know the darkness of our own hearts. Admit a wrong as a wrong by the standard of the word of the Lord.

And look again by faith to Jesus, who bore even that wrong. The Lord received my sins through His baptism and received their judgment on the Cross. It is not that the salvation of the Lord was true at first and has now become insufficient. It is my heart today accepting again the atonement that has already been accomplished. This is the life of often offering the sacrifice of atonement by faith.

Hebrews 10:18 says as follows.

"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18).

What we repeat is not the sacrifice of the Lord. Nor do we ask Jesus to be baptized again and to die again. It is ruminating on the eternal atonement He accomplished once, and washing the darkness of the conscience with that grace. When we believe the fact of salvation and admit our own wrongs, the heart that hesitated, pressed down by sin, becomes bright again and gains the strength to serve the Lord.

We can engrave this faith on our hearts even while working alone. In the worship where we hear the word, too, we can look back on ourselves and believe what the Lord has done. Do not put it off until a fixed day. Each time your heart has grown dark, each time a wrong has been revealed, and each time a heart that resents the other person takes hold of you, stand before God. Confirm by faith how the Lord removed your sins.

This grace must also carry over into the attitude with which we treat other people. If you have done wrong, tell the other person that you did wrong and apologize. It is not that a person

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who leads the work does not need to apologize. Listen from the other person's standpoint to what hurt and difficulty there was, and admit your wrong. Do not avoid the apology you must make to a person by saying that you believe in salvation before God.

Also, do not think that the Lord bore only your sins. The Lord bore the sins of that person who believes together with us, too. Lay down the heart that holds on endlessly to the other person's faults and wants to judge, and treat that person with the grace by which the Lord remitted your sins. Talk about the wrong, and set right what must be set right, but do not make one another enemies. Wait for that person, look for the way to be together again, and have fellowship in the light the Lord has given.

When we treat one another as precious, the work of serving the gospel also changes. We see the labor another person has taken on, and we come to know that because he bears that work, I can do the work entrusted to me. Where only resentment used to pile up, thanksgiving comes out. God wants us, who believe in the once-for-all atonement, to enjoy that grace in daily life and to serve with our hearts joined together.

We keep the gospel we have received as precious and serve it together

Recall again the command not to take out the poles of the ark but to leave them as they are. The holy furnishing God had appointed was not to be handled according to people's convenience. The word of salvation given to us is the same. It is not a word that we may now take lightly because we have

believed and been saved. We must hold that word in our hearts and preach it just as it is.

When you preach the gospel, do not leave out that Jesus is God, or leave out that He bore sin through His baptism, or leave out the judgment of the Cross. Keep as one the salvation we have learned through the blue, purple, and scarlet thread of the tabernacle. God came as a man, received baptism, shed His blood and died, and rose again, and so saved us. Do not reduce or change this salvation to suit people's reactions, but preach in full the gospel you have believed.

Serving is not accomplished only by thoughts in the head. Together with the heart that believes in the Lord, we must also offer our bodies, our time, and our strength. The gospel is preached when the one who preaches the word, the one who prepares what is needed, the one who helps with material things and labor, and the one who prays together join their hearts by faith. Do not remain in the position of leaving things to other people and only talking yourself. Find the work God has entrusted to you and actually serve.

Hebrews 10:19–25 teaches, together with the boldness to draw near to God, a life that holds fast the hope and considers one another to stir up love and good works. The remission of sins is not a qualification to live alone without any relationship with the church. It is the grace that leads us on to a life of hearing the word together, holding up those who have grown weak, and serving the gospel together. Examining also the responsibilities we owe to our family and neighbors, bear by faith the work the Lord has entrusted to you.

The ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat show us together the holy law of God and perfect salvation. Admit your sins before the word, and believe in the eternal atonement Jesus accomplished. Engraving that grace on your heart every day,

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forgive one another, and preach the gospel you have received as something precious. God leads His saved people by His word. In the next chapter we will look at the priest, who stands before God on behalf of the people. The names of the people engraved on the stones attached to the garments of the priest will show for whom that office exists.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do the materials and measurements of the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat differ? When we examine together the tablets of stone inside the ark and the blood on the mercy seat, what do we come to learn about the law of God and the grace of salvation?

2. Which of my sins, committed when, are included in the once-for-all atonement Jesus accomplished with His baptism and the Cross? Read Hebrews 10:14 and 18, and distinguish between often ruminating on the atonement already accomplished and trying to obtain a new atonement.

3. Is there now a wrong to admit and apologize for, or a person to forgive? Look back on your relationships with a heart that believes in the grace of salvation, and think about the work to serve together in order to preach in full the gospel you have received. ✉

Chapter 14

The priest who bears the names of the people

Read Together Leviticus 16:4, 23–24 · Matthew 3:13–17 · Hebrews 4:14–16; 7:23–28 · 1 Peter 2:5, 9 · 1 John 5:6–8 · Ephesians 6:14–16

< Exodus 28:12 >

"And you shall put the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. So Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders as a memorial."

< Exodus 28:29 >

"So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the LORD continually."

The people called to stand before God

In the previous chapter we looked, through the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat, at the place where God meets the people. Now let us turn our eyes to the person who will serve in that holy place. Who stands before God on behalf of the people? What clothing does he wear, and whose names does he bear as he goes in? Exodus chapter 28 deals as closely

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with the office of the person who serves there as with the furnishings of the tabernacle.

God calls Aaron and his sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar, and entrusts them with the office of priest. The purpose of this calling is to serve God. The starting point is not that a person takes a high position by himself or adorns his authority with special clothing. God sets them apart so that they may do the work He has entrusted to them according to His word (Exodus 28:1–3).

If here we call Aaron and his sons all high priests, confusion arises. After explaining at length the garments to be put on Aaron, this chapter gives separate instructions for the clothing of his sons. We must understand Aaron as the high priest, who represents the people, and his sons as the priests who serve together. There is also a distinction between the service continually performed in the holy place and the special service the high priest undertakes. Hebrews 9:6–7, too, explains this difference.

The priest is first of all a person who serves God. He must not change according to his own thinking the sacrifices God has entrusted to him, but perform them according to His word. Today, we too must not make being recognized by people the first purpose of our service. Preaching the salvation God accomplished through the baptism and the Cross of Jesus is the work He has entrusted to us. When we serve following that will, our neighbors who suffer because of sin also receive true help. Serving God and loving the souls of people are connected in this way.

Let us distinguish the names of the garments and their accessories one by one

In the garments of Aaron there appear the skillfully woven tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod, the breastplate, the turban, and the sash. There are many unfamiliar words, but it becomes much easier if we divide them into what is worn on the body and what is attached over it. Here the skillfully woven tunic is the garment worn on the body; over it the blue robe is worn, and over that the ephod and the breastplate are placed. If we read together the instructions for putting them on in Exodus 29:5–6, we can confirm this relationship.

The ephod is a garment with two shoulder straps, that is, devices that join the shoulder parts. It is made of gold thread, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, and the band woven onto the ephod is also made of the same materials. The breastplate is a separate object attached to the chest. It would be good to take care not to call the breastplate by the same name as the ephod, or to think of the whole ephod simply as a plate of stones.

The materials also differ from garment to garment. For the ephod and the breastplate several kinds of thread are used, but the text commands that the robe of the ephod be made all of blue. The tunic and the turban are made of fine linen. The explanations of the band woven onto the ephod and of the sash made with embroidery also appear separately. If we lump them together and say that all the garments were made of the same five materials, we miss the detailed instructions of the text.

For the sons of Aaron, tunics, sashes, and hats to wear on the head are made. Also, for Aaron and his sons alike, linen trousers are provided, covering from the waist to the thighs. The trousers here are undergarments that cover the lower body.

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The tunic and the trousers that cover the lower body are distinct items here. God places within the ordinance of service not only the jewels that catch the eye but even the parts of the body that are covered (Exodus 28:39–43).

God says to make these garments for glory and for beauty. At the same time, He connects them with the holy office. Beauty and responsibility are together. The labor of those who have received wisdom to make the garments with fine workmanship also takes part in this service. Today, too, we should treasure the position that is seen outwardly, but at the same time think of the honesty and self-restraint that position demands.

Let us look at these garments as the garments of faith we put on in our hearts today. The trousers that cover the lower body of the priest make us think of the salvation by which God covers our sins and uncleanness with His righteousness. This is not telling us to hide our shameful wrongs from people. It means that the basis that makes us righteous does not lie in our own clean deeds but in Jesus, who bore sin through His baptism and shed His blood and was judged. We believe in that salvation with our hearts and draw near before God.

Do not look at the band of the ephod, woven of the same materials, merely as a decoration either. The person who serves needs the strength of faith that holds on to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If we give up everything each time we see our own shortcomings, we cannot serve the gospel. Just as Ephesians 6:14–16 speaks of the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shield of faith, we must hold on in our hearts to the salvation that has made us righteous. Admit and set right your wrongs, but do not deny, because of those wrongs, even the remission of sins the Lord accomplished. Rise again with this faith and bear the work entrusted to you.

The names of the people engraved on the two shoulders

On the two shoulder straps of the ephod are attached two stones that the Bible text calls onyx. On them the names of the sons of Israel are engraved, divided six to each. The names are engraved in the order of their birth, engraved clearly like the engravings of a signet, and set in settings of gold. Aaron bears those names on his two shoulders and stands before God. In the text these are called memorial stones (Exodus 28:9–12).

When we look carefully at the garments, we do not see only the one man Aaron. On his shoulders the names of the people are placed. The people are involved together in the office Aaron undertakes before God. The representative character of the priest is not a vague expression but is revealed through the stones engraved with names. In the service for the people, the people cannot be erased.

The word ‘memorial’ need not be read to mean that stones are necessary because God forgets the names. It is presenting the people before Him in the way God appointed. Keep in your heart the point that the priest’s place is not one in which he puts forward his own name, but one in which he stands bearing the names of the people entrusted to him.

Hold the souls of other people in your heart and draw near to God and pray. Do not stop at thinking vaguely of the people you must help, but remember their names and their circumstances. You can pray for a sick family member, a discouraged saint, and a neighbor who does not yet know the gospel. The figure of the priest who bears the names of the people makes us reflect on toward whom our prayer is directed.

Holding a soul in the heart goes on from prayer to the service of preaching the gospel. Take an interest in whether

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that person knows and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and examine the word together. If he is a saint who has already received the remission of sins, help him to stand firm in that faith, and if he is a person who is still afraid because of sin, tell him how Jesus bore that sin and was judged. To hold a name in the heart is to look into even how that soul stands before God.

The breastplate on the chest and judgment before God

The breastplate of judgment is made with fine workmanship of the same materials as the ephod. It is a square shape folded double, and its length and width are each a span. On it stones are set in four rows, three in each row. On each stone is engraved one of the names of the twelve tribes. We may remember the difference that on the two stones of the shoulders six names each are engraved, and on the twelve stones of the breastplate one name each.

The breastplate is connected to the ephod with chains of gold, rings, and a blue cord. Its upper part is attached and its lower part is also fastened so that it does not come loose from the ephod. After explaining that connection at length, the text tells us its purpose. It is so that when Aaron goes into the holy place he may bear the names of Israel on his chest and they may be a memorial before God continually (Exodus 28:15–29).

There are cases in which the names of the stones are expressed differently according to the Bible translation. It is difficult to match all the ancient names of stones to particular minerals of today. Rather than trying first to fix exactly what color each stone was, we should pay attention first to the

twelve stones and the twelve names of which the text clearly speaks. An explanation that matches each stone one by one with the character or future destiny of a tribe is also not in this text.

In the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim are put. When Aaron goes in before God, he bears them over his heart and bears the judgment of Israel. But Exodus chapter 28 does not explain the shape or materials of the two objects, or the specific procedure for obtaining an answer. We cannot imagine and then fix as fact that the stones shone with a particular color or that letters appeared one after another.

Through the light and perfection of the Urim and the Thummim we learn by what we must judge faith. The standard is the salvation the materials of the breastplate point to, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which says that Jesus, who is God, bore our sins through His baptism, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again, and so saved us perfectly. The feelings of the person judging, or the position, knowledge, or extent of devotion of the other person, cannot be the standard. First we ourselves must have the evidence of having believed in this gospel with our hearts and received the remission of sins.

The person who believes in this gospel is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins before God. To the person who is still under sin because he cannot yet believe in that salvation, we must say clearly that he needs the remission of sins. We cannot teach that, merely on the grounds that he calls on the name of Jesus, it is all right to leave out the transfer of sins through the baptism. 1 John 5:6–8 tells together of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, and the witness of the Spirit. We must believe together in His bearing sin through His baptism and His being judged on the Cross.

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God has entrusted the saints who have received the remission of sins and received the Holy Spirit with the office of discerning faith by this gospel and leading souls to Christ. Therefore, do not avoid the work of discerning between saved faith and faith that has not yet obtained the remission of sins. Its purpose does not lie in defeating the other person. It lies in preaching the gospel to the person who needs the remission of sins so that he may reach salvation, and in nurturing with that word the person who has already believed. Do not forget the fact that the names of the people are engraved on the breastplate of judgment. Right judgment and the love that holds souls in the heart must be together.

The judgment that a person is righteous is not a judgment that all of that person's actions are perfect. If we confuse the perfection of the remission of sins with the weakness of the flesh, we cannot rightly examine either our own faith or the faith of others. The perfect salvation God accomplished is the standard of judgment, and we examine that faith according to the word of which the Holy Spirit bears witness.

Also, respect the right judgment and guidance that the workers God has set up in the church give according to the word and the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do not refuse that guidance merely on the grounds that it differs from your own taste, but examine whether it accords with the word and then join hearts and follow. The person who leads also must not put forward his own thinking as the will of God. For the saints to serve the gospel together, following judgment that accords with the word of the Bible and the will of God, is the unity of the church. This is how we learn the meaning of the Urim and the Thummim in the light of the gospel; it is not reproducing the way those objects worked or declaring every decision of people infallible.

The pomegranates and the golden bells of the blue robe

The robe of the ephod is made all of blue. The surround of the opening for the head is woven strongly so that it does not tear. On its hem, pomegranates made of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and golden bells, are attached alternately. The ephod and the robe are different garments, and the pomegranates and the golden bells are not decorations of the breastplate but accessories on the edge of the robe.

That sound is to be heard when Aaron goes into the holy place to serve before God or comes out, and the text connects this ordinance with his not dying (Exodus 28:31–35). Here we read how solemn a matter it is to serve the holy God. The sound of the bells is mentioned together with the service God appointed. There is no need to explain that sound itself as a mysterious power that protects a person.

Also, we must not transfer the figure wearing these garments as it is into every scene of the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16:4 presents separately the holy linen tunic, the linen trousers, the linen sash, and the linen turban worn on the Day of Atonement. In verses 23–24 of the same chapter there is also the procedure of taking off the garments, washing, and changing. Therefore we should avoid an explanation that concludes that the golden bells rang every time blood was sprinkled in the Most Holy Place.

In the blue robe the meaning of the salvation by which our sins were washed away through the baptism of Jesus appears. The pomegranates and the golden bells made of blue, purple, and scarlet thread on the edge of the robe also lead to the work of preaching that gospel. The news that Jesus, who is God, bore our sins through His baptism and received the judgment with

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the blood of the Cross must continue to be heard in the hearts of the saints. It has not become an unnecessary word because we have already heard it.

When wrong thoughts and actions are revealed, believe the fact that the Lord bore even this sin through His baptism. When the fear of judgment comes flooding in, believe that the Lord received the judgment of that sin in our place. When your heart wavers, remember that the One who accomplished that salvation is Jesus Christ, who is God. Though our hearts waver, the salvation God accomplished does not change. Hear and believe this gospel again and again, gain strength of heart, and preach it to others as well. The exhortation through the golden bells is thus to let the news of the remission of sins keep ringing in our lives and our service.

The holiness the gold plate on the forehead conveys

On the front of Aaron's turban a plate made of pure gold is attached. On that plate the words *"HOLINESS TO THE LORD"* are engraved like the engraving of a signet, and it is tied with a blue cord. The words placed on the forehead reveal to whom the service belongs. Holiness is not a mark that boasts of one's own excellence but a sign of being set apart to the holy God.

Exodus 28:38 says that Aaron bears *"the iniquity of the holy things"* that the children of Israel offer. This means the guilt related to the gifts offered as holy. It then speaks of those gifts being accepted before God. The fact that the problem of sin can be involved even in what the people offer as holy catches our attention. The shortcomings of the one who offers do not all disappear merely on the grounds that he offered

something precious. The office of the representative whom God prepared and the grace by which He accepts are needed.

Look carefully at the blue cord that ties the gold plate. The baptism of Jesus, which the blue signifies, makes clear how we have become holy. Because Jesus bore the sin of mankind through that baptism and paid the price of sin on the Cross, the person who believes this has become a holy person without sin. Holiness is not produced by one's own religious achievement. We obtain holiness by believing in the remission of sins Christ accomplished.

The sin of the world that Jesus bore includes both the sins we have committed until now and the sins we will commit from now on as we go on living. Even after receiving the remission of sins, we discover our own shortcomings and wrongs every day. Each time, it is not that we supplement the atonement with prayers of repentance asking Him to remove anew sins not yet solved. We must admit our sins and wash our hearts by believing the word that those sins, too, have already been passed on to Jesus and that the Lord received their judgment. Because it is the remission He accomplished once and for all, we can rely on it every day. This faith does not make us take wrongs lightly; it makes us admit our wrongs without hiding them and yet serve God in the assurance of salvation.

The other colored threads also convey the same flow of salvation. The purple signifies the divinity and kingship of Jesus, and the scarlet the blood of the Cross and the judgment He received in our place. The fine woven linen points to the washing away of sin and the righteous salvation God accomplished according to His word, and the gold thread to the faith that believes in this salvation with the heart. When we read the materials of the tabernacle in the light of the work of

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Christ, all their meanings lead to one salvation. Do not stop at knowing only the names of the materials in your head, but accept with your own faith the salvation shown in those materials.

Matthew chapter 3 records the baptism of Jesus and the fulfilling of all righteousness, and 1 John chapter 5 tells of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, and the witness of the Spirit. Reading these words together, look at the baptism and the Cross as one work of salvation. Jesus bore our sins through His baptism and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Believing in this baptism and this shedding of blood together is the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Relying on the High Priest, who knows our names

Recall together the names on the shoulders, the names on the chest, and the words of holiness on the forehead. The garments of Aaron show side by side the responsibility of representing the people and the holiness that belongs to God. The priest must not forget the people, nor can he change according to his own will the office God has appointed. What the beautiful garments teach is not the superiority of the person wearing them but the weight of the service entrusted to him.

The New Testament leads our eyes to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 4:14–16 says that Jesus is the High Priest who knows our weaknesses and yet is without sin. Therefore we draw near relying on Him, to obtain mercy and grace in time of need. Hebrews 7:25 teaches that He always lives to make intercession for us.

We can meditate together on the fact that Aaron bore the stones engraved with names and on the word that Jesus intercedes for us. But there is no need to imagine that Jesus, too, wore garments of the same materials in heaven. The important connection is the office of standing before God on behalf of the people, and Christ is the One who fulfills that office eternally and perfectly.

1 Peter 2:5 and 9 call the saints a holy priesthood, and have them offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ and proclaim the praises of God. We who have received the remission of sins and received the Holy Spirit have been entrusted with the priestly service of preaching this gospel. It is not making salvation for others with our own righteousness, but preaching the salvation Christ accomplished and serving so that other souls, too, may receive the remission of sins by faith. Let those who preach the word and those who help that work join hearts within the church and bear this office.

Therefore, when we hold other people in our hearts and pray and preach the gospel, there is no need to hide our own weakness either. Rather, when we remember the grace we have received, we can listen more closely to the difficulties of others as well. But here one question remains. How could Aaron himself, who stands for the people, begin the holy service? In the next chapter we will look at the consecration in which he and his sons are washed and established through the sacrifices.

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Questions for Reflection

1. For whom do the names of the people engraved on the shoulders and the chest show that the service is performed? Who is the person I am now holding in my heart, to whom I will preach the gospel or whose faith I will help?

2. What is the standard of faith that the breastplate of judgment teaches? How should we distinguish between the fact that we are righteous people who have received the remission of sins and the fact that there are still shortcomings in our actions?

3. When you are discouraged because of your own wrongs, how should you rely on the baptism and the Cross of Jesus? With this faith, what is the service you will bear by joining your heart with the right guidance of the church? ✉

Chapter 15

The consecration that establishes the priests

Read Together Leviticus 1:3–5; 16:21–22 · Matthew 3:13–17; 11:10–11 · Luke 1:5 · Ephesians 1:13 · John 1:29–34 · Hebrews 5:1–4; 7:26–28; 9:11–14; 10:10–14

< Exodus 29:4 >

“And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water.”

< Exodus 29:10 >

“You shall also have the bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull.”

The person who will serve the people also needs grace

In the previous chapter we saw Aaron bearing the names of the people on his shoulders and his chest. The beautiful garments reveal the fact that he belongs to God and represents the people. But preparing the garments does not finish all the preparation. God commands that the person who will wear those garments be established for the holy service. Exodus chapter 29 explains that very consecration.

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The consecration is the establishing of people to perform the office entrusted to them. In the text, those who are consecrated are Aaron and his sons. It is neither a personal inauguration for Aaron alone, nor an event that distributes the same priestly office to all the people. God sets apart those He has called to serve Him, according to the procedure He has appointed.

Now, in that procedure there is a sin offering. This means that the person who will offer sacrifices for others also needs atonement himself. Taking up an office does not free one from sin and weakness. Hebrews 5:1–4 explains that the high priest established from among men must offer the sacrifice of atonement for himself as well, because of his own weakness. That position is not an honor one takes for oneself but a position that follows the calling of God.

The priest who takes up the office for the remission of the people's sins must also first have his own sins solved. An office of teaching others, or a long record of service, cannot remove sins. He must first believe in the gospel that he has received the remission of all his sins through the baptism and the blood of Jesus. The person who stands before God by this grace can also preach to others the salvation he has received. Looking at the consecration, what we must examine first of all is not how far we ourselves have acquired the qualification for service, but whether we believe in the remission of sins God has prepared.

Washed and clothed at the door of the tabernacle of meeting

Exodus chapter 29 first has the things needed for the consecration prepared. One young bull, two rams without blemish, and, of fine wheat flour, unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil are prepared. All of these are kinds of bread made without leaven. Then Aaron and his sons are brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and washed with water. In the first scene of the consecration they stand as people who receive washing rather than people who display themselves.

Leviticus chapter 8 shows this command being carried out. Moses gathers the congregation at the door of the tabernacle of meeting and announces that he is doing what God has commanded. Then he washes Aaron and his sons and clothes them. The one officiating at this time is Moses. We must not read it as if Aaron, who was still in the course of being consecrated, had presided over the whole ceremony with his own hands.

On Aaron are put the tunic and the sash, the robe and the ephod, and the breastplate is attached. Leviticus chapter 8 also records the putting of the Urim and the Thummim in the breastplate and the attaching of the gold plate to the turban. Then Moses sets apart the tabernacle and the furnishings in it with oil, sprinkles oil on the altar seven times, and pours the anointing oil on Aaron’s head as well. The sons are furnished with the tunics, sashes, and hats appointed for them.

The anointing oil is the oil used when setting apart for holy service. In this scene both the people and the place of service are set apart so as to belong to God. There is no need to think of the water for washing, the garments for wearing, and the oil

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for anointing as the same thing. Each act takes its own place within the process of consecration. When we examine the meaning of salvation in the baptism of Jesus, too, we must not stay only with this one washing with water but look together at the laying on of hands and the blood of the sacrifice that come afterward.

The sin offering of the bull and the cleansing of the altar

First the bull is brought before the tabernacle of meeting. Aaron and his sons put their hands on its head. Moses kills the bull, puts its blood on the horns of the altar with his finger, and pours the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. The fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, and the two kidneys with their fat are burned on the altar. The flesh, skin, and offal of the bull are to be burned outside the camp (Exodus 29:10–14).

In this procedure it is important to distinguish the places. The place where the blood is put is the horns of the altar, and the place where the remaining blood is poured is the base of the altar. The appointed portions of fat are burned on the altar, but the flesh, skin, and offal are burned outside the camp. If we merge this into a scene in which every part of the offering is burned in one place, it becomes hard to distinguish it from the burnt offering that comes afterward.

Leviticus 8:15 states clearly that Moses purified the altar with the blood and consecrated it. Therefore this sin offering concerns not only the people being consecrated but also the cleansing of the altar, the place of service. We must not speak only of the matter of a person’s heart becoming clean and erase

the explanation about the altar. Both the person and the place that will serve the holy God are prepared together.

Look at the laying on of hands and the shedding of blood together in this sacrifice. The laying on of hands, which passes the sins of the priests on to the offering, and the death of the offering, which receives the judgment of those sins, lead to one atonement. We cannot speak of the shedding of blood while leaving out the transfer of sin, nor can we say that the sins were passed on and yet leave out the judgment on those sins. God did not simply remit sin because He thought little of it; He prepared a sacrifice that would bear the sins and be judged instead.

Jesus fulfilled this promise of salvation. He was baptized by John the Baptist and bore our sins, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and was judged on the Cross. Therefore what we need is the faith that believes in this baptism and this blood together. The priest himself, too, must obtain the remission of sins by this way God has prepared. The laying on of hands and the sacrifice of the consecration impress this order of salvation on our hearts.

The burnt offering in which the first ram is offered whole

After the sin offering of the bull, one ram is brought. Aaron and his sons again put their hands on its head. After the ram is killed, its blood is sprinkled all around on the altar. This differs from the procedure of putting the blood of the bull on the horns of the altar. Here is the reason we must read the command for each offering separately even within the same consecration.

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The ram is cut in pieces, and after its entrails and legs are washed, its head and the other parts are burned together on the altar. Exodus 29:18 calls this a burnt offering to God. Unlike the earlier scene in which the flesh of the bull was burned outside the camp, here the burning of the whole ram on the altar is emphasized. Leviticus 8:18–21 also records this process.

The burnt offering is a sacrifice in which the offering is burned and offered to God. The text explains it as a sacrifice offered as a sweet aroma to God. In this scene of being offered whole, we can meditate on the character of the service that belongs to God. That is, in the life of the priest, serving God cannot be treated like a hobby that applies only to part of his time. However, no separate spiritual meaning is specified for the head or for each leg individually.

Examining the sin offering and the burnt offering, admit your sins and the judgment on those sins, and believe in the sacrifice God has prepared. Even when learning this meaning of salvation, we must distinguish the kinds of sacrifices. The fact that they deal together with the great theme of the remission of sins does not mean that the blood of every sacrifice is put on the horns of the altar or that all the flesh is burned outside the camp.

The second ram and the blood put on the ear, the hand, and the foot

The ram brought next is the ram of the consecration. After Aaron and his sons have put their hands on its head, some of its blood is put on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the big toe of the right foot of Aaron and his sons. Then the blood is sprinkled all around on the altar. This is a

special act that was not in the two preceding sacrifices (Exodus 29:19–20).

Seeing the ear, the hand, and the foot mentioned together, we can meditate on offering to God the whole of the life in which we hear, act, and walk. However, Exodus does not explain each one, saying that the ear must mean this and the thumb must mean that. It is enough to read first the actual ordinance of putting the blood on the body, and on that basis to share the application to life.

Moses takes the fat portions of the ram and the right thigh, puts them with the loaves of bread from the basket in the hands of Aaron and his sons, and has them wave these before God. This is the wave offering. After that he receives them back from their hands and burns them on the altar. The scene in which the hands of those being consecrated are filled with the gifts to be offered to God is impressive. The entrusted office makes one think of the responsibility to serve God rather than of the authority to enlarge one's own possessions.

The breast of that ram is given as Moses' portion. Exodus 29:27–28 goes on to speak also of the ordinance for the breast and the thigh that are to go to the priests from the peace offerings of Israel. But the way the right thigh is actually dealt with in this consecration is that it is burned on the altar, as commanded earlier. We must not apply the later general ordinance as it is to every part of this sacrifice.

Also, the blood on the altar and the anointing oil are sprinkled on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons and their garments, to make them holy. Leviticus 8:30 records this. The sight of blood and oil being sprinkled on bodies wearing beautiful garments shows that the holy office does not begin with outward adornment alone. They come to serve after

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passing through the process of setting apart that God has appointed.

The holy meal and the waiting of seven days

The flesh of the ram of the consecration is boiled in a holy place. Aaron and his sons eat that flesh and the bread from the basket at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Exodus 29:33 explains that this food is what was used for atonement, to consecrate and sanctify them. Another person who does not belong to that place is not allowed to eat it with them, and what remains until the morning must be burned with fire.

This meal connects the prepared offering with the people who take part in the holy service. They receive the portion God has given, but they do not decide as they please even the way to divide it arbitrarily or keep it. The text tells us the place and the people for eating, and even how to deal with the leftover food. Rather than concluding that it is a ceremony the same as the Lord's Supper of today, we should first understand the place this meal has within the consecration.

The consecration goes on for seven days. Exodus 29:35–37 commands that a bull be offered as a sin offering every day and that the altar be cleansed and sanctified. Leviticus 8:33–35 tells Aaron and his sons not to leave the door of the tabernacle of meeting until the period of consecration is ended, and to keep the charge of God day and night. Before beginning their service, they had to remain in the word and fill the appointed time.

The holy garments of Aaron are passed on to the son who will take up his office after him (Exodus 29:29–30). One person's service has an end, and the next person carries it on.

This fact helps us not to regard our position as an eternal possession. Serving faithfully during the time it is entrusted, and preparing so that the next person may stand according to the word, is also part of responsible service.

The remission of sins examined through the laying on of hands and baptism

Now let us examine more clearly the basis of the remission of sins that we learned through the laying on of hands and the sacrifice of the consecration. God commanded that hands be put on the head of the offering, and promised that He would accept that offering and let it be an atonement. Read Leviticus 1:4.

"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

It is not the zeal of the person laying on hands or the strength of his hand that removes sin. It is believing in the sacrifice God appointed and in the promise of atonement, and offering the sacrifice according to that word. The fulfillment of this promise is the baptism and the Cross of Jesus. This does not mean that today we must repeat a ceremony of putting our hands on Jesus. It is believing in Jesus, who has already borne our sins through His baptism and paid the price of those sins.

The bearing of sin and the sacrifice for that sin are together. Without separating either one, believe in the remission of sins accomplished through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. This is faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Do not look for the assurance of the remission of sins in your own efforts or in a change of feelings. We must

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rely on the fact of salvation, that Jesus bore our sins and received the judgment of those sins.

The passages to be read together with this interpretation must each be examined for their own content. Leviticus 1:4 speaks of putting a hand on the head of the burnt offering and of that offering being accepted and becoming an atonement. Leviticus 16:21–22 explains more specifically the putting of both hands on the live goat, the confessing of sins, the laying of those sins on the goat, and the sending of it into the wilderness. We must not speak of the latter procedure of confession as if it were a scene recorded as added, just as it is, to the consecration with the bull in Exodus chapter 29.

In Matthew 3:13–17 Jesus, being baptized by John, says that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness. Then in John 1:29 John testifies of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Because Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through His baptism, He bore that sin and went to the Cross. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on to the offering and that offering was judged, Jesus, too, after bearing our sins, was judged in our place. This is the meaning of salvation that we read by connecting the laying on of hands with baptism.

Here we must also clearly know the role of John the Baptist. Luke 1:5 records that his father was the priest Zacharias and that his mother Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. In Matthew 11:10–11 Jesus reveals John as the messenger who prepares His way, and says that among those born of women there has not risen one greater than he. John does not remain merely a man who lived frugally and cried out for repentance. When we examine this word and his priestly lineage together, the office of the representative who baptized Jesus and passed the sin of mankind on to Him is revealed.

John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind, and at this time he carried out the role the high priest of the Old Testament had in passing sins on to the offering on behalf of the people. This high-priestly role must be distinguished from the sense that John was installed in the official position of high priest of the temple. The Bible does not record such an installation. What we hold on to here is the fact that through his representative work the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus, and that Jesus received the judgment of that sin and accomplished salvation.

From the consecrated priests to the eternal High Priest

Those who have completed the consecration take up the holy office. But they are still weak people, priests who need atonement for themselves. Hebrews 7:26–28 shows here the difference of Jesus Christ. Jesus is holy and harmless, and He has no need to offer sacrifices first for His own sins. His sacrifice, in which He offered up Himself, is something done once for all.

Therefore, when we connect the consecration of Aaron with the work of Jesus, we cannot match every procedure identically. Nor must we explain the baptism of Jesus as the same as the cleansing Aaron received in order to wash away his own sins. Jesus is the Savior, who committed no sin, and what He bore is the sin of mankind. We must remember the difference between the sinful priests and the sinless Christ.

Hebrews 9:11–14 teaches that Christ accomplished eternal atonement with His own blood and cleanses our conscience so

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that we may serve the living God. Hebrews 10:14 says as follows.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

We are not people who, with the remission of sins still incomplete, fill in the remaining part with our own service. By believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus bore all sins and was judged, we have become righteous people without sin. It is not that we obtain salvation only when we become better tomorrow; we believe now in the salvation the Lord has completed. Therefore there is no need to repeat the old consecration and add atonement. We have only to believe in the remission of sins God has already given and serve Him.

In the heart that has obtained the remission of sins the Holy Spirit dwells. Ephesians 1:13 teaches that the person who has heard and believed the gospel of salvation has been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. God did not leave us as guests standing far off but made us His own children and His people. The assurance of having become a person without sin, the relationship of calling God Father, and the life led by the Holy Spirit are given together in this salvation. Just as in the consecration the people who would serve God were established, we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have also become people who belong to God and serve Him.

Honesty accompanies the life that believes in that grace. When a person who serves has done wrong, he must admit the wrong and set it right rather than hide it using his office as a shield. When dealing with the weakness of others, too, he must remember that he himself first received mercy. Being assured of the remission of sins does not mean that all of a human being's actions have become perfect. Because he relies on grace, he can lay himself more honestly before God.

Even when you become aware of daily sins, do not forget this order. After admitting the sin, it is not that we strive to make the remission of sins again by our own merit or by a new sacrifice. It is cleansing our hearts by believing that the Lord bore that sin, too, through His baptism, and shed His blood and received its judgment as well. With that faith, ask God for help and act according to the word. The once-for-all salvation is the firm basis on which we can walk with God and serve every day.

The person who has received this grace does not stop at enjoying only the relief of salvation by himself. Join hearts within the church with the saints who believe the same gospel, and preach this salvation to other souls as well. We can teach the word, share writings that contain the gospel, and help the work of preaching with prayer and actual labor. It is not an office we take up because our ability is perfect. It is an office we bear because God, who made us righteous and gave us the Holy Spirit, has established us to preach that gospel to others as well.

The consecration we have looked at so far is the seven-day ceremony that establishes the priests. The Day of Atonement, which we will look at in the next chapter, is the rite the high priest performs for the people on an appointed day each year. If we go forward keeping the consecration of the priests and the yearly atonement for the people distinct, we will read even more clearly what the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ accomplished.

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Questions for Reflection

1. In light of the fact that the priest himself also had to receive atonement first, where should we look for the basis for beginning service? Are we not confusing office with the remission of sins?

2. Read Leviticus 1:4 and Matthew 3:13–17 together. How are the laying on of hands and baptism, the transfer of sin and the judgment of the sacrifice, connected? How do the actual ways of dealing with the blood of the bull and the two rams differ?

3. How do the fact that we have received the remission of sins once and for all and become righteous people and the fact that we must admit our wrongs every day hold together? As children of God who have received the Holy Spirit, what is the gospel service we will bear together with the church? ✉

Chapter 16

From the Day of Atonement to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ

Read Together Matthew 3:13–17; 11:11–14 · Luke 1:5–17, 76–80; 3:1–3 · John 1:29–34 · 1 John 5:6–8

< Leviticus 16:30 >

"For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD."

< Hebrews 9:12 >

"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."

The high priest, who needs atonement for himself

The consecration of the priests we looked at in the previous chapter showed the fact that even the person who serves God needs washing and atonement. Now in Leviticus chapter 16 we meet the Day of Atonement, on which the high priest serves for all the congregation. Even the person who stands before God bearing the names of the people could not remove his own sins

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by himself. He, too, needed the offering and the procedure God had appointed.

This word begins against the background of the event in which the two sons of Aaron died while drawing near before God. God tells Aaron not to come at just any time before the mercy seat inside the veil. The fact that one has received the office of drawing near does not become the right to act according to one's own will. In the first scene of the Day of Atonement, the holiness of God and the position of the person who must follow His word are revealed together.

Aaron had to wash his body with water and put on the linen tunic and trousers, the sash and the turban. He prepares a bull as a sin offering for himself and his house, and a ram as a burnt offering. Look carefully at the order in which his own atonement is placed before the service for the people. The office of representing the people does not prove his personal sinlessness.

When we think of the service of the tabernacle, we commonly recall the splendor of gold and jewels. But the garments the text specifies when he goes inside the veil on the Day of Atonement are linen garments. Even the high priest could not put forward his own merit. We, too, are people who cannot call ourselves righteous before God, who judges sin. Only when we first admit this fact do we come to know why the blood of the offering the high priest takes in is needed. For the person who must receive the judgment of sin, God prepared a life to be offered in his place.

Going in with the blood and cleansing the sanctuary

After killing the bull for himself, Aaron takes burning coals from the altar, along with finely beaten incense, inside the veil. He must make the smoke of the incense cover the mercy seat that is on the ark of the Testimony. Then he sprinkles the blood of the bull on the east side of the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat he sprinkles it seven times. The procedure of incense and blood shows how solemn a service it is for the high priest to draw near before God.

Next he kills the goat of the sin offering for the people and brings its blood inside the veil. He sprinkles it on the mercy seat and before it, as he did with the blood of the bull. The two kinds of blood do not come from the same animal. First there is the bull for himself and his house, and then there is the goat for the congregation. If we distinguish the order and the objects of the sacrifices, we can follow the long explanation of Leviticus more accurately.

What is surprising here is the word that atonement is made not only for people but also for the Most Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar. This does not mean that the sanctuary committed moral wrongs like a person. The text explains that the sanctuary is cleansed because of the uncleanness and transgressions of the people. The cleanness of the place where God dwells among the people was not unrelated to their lives either. This is a passage that keeps us from thinking of sin as a problem that stays only inside the individual's heart.

From the time the high priest goes in to make atonement until he comes out, no other person may be in the tabernacle of meeting. The procedure in which he comes out, puts the blood

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of the bull and the goat on the horns of the altar, and sprinkles it seven times also follows. God did not let people make their own arbitrary ways of drawing near. Through the service He commanded, He dealt with the cleanness of the people and of the sanctuary in their midst.

The different roles the two goats show

Both of the two goats the congregation prepared are presented before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. But the two goats do not go through the same process. Lots are cast, and one is set apart for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. The goat whose blood was taken in earlier is the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD. The goat on which the lot fell for the scapegoat is kept alive and then sent into the wilderness.

After finishing the atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, Aaron lays both his hands on the head of the live goat. He confesses all the iniquities and transgressions of the children of Israel and puts those sins on the head of the goat. A man appointed beforehand takes that goat to an uninhabited land and releases it. Leviticus 16:21–22 clearly records the putting of the sins on the goat and the goat's departing bearing those iniquities.

The two goats each take a role within the one service of the Day of Atonement. One goat is killed and its blood is used, and the other goat departs alive, bearing the sins. When we read the procedure of cleansing the sanctuary with blood and the procedure of carrying the sins of the congregation outside as divided in this way, the flow of the text becomes clear.

Through these two procedures God deals with the sins of the people and the uncleanness of the sanctuary in their midst.

When and how the goat that went into the wilderness died, this text does not say. What the Bible emphasizes is the fact that the goat departs bearing the iniquities of the people and is released in a land where there is no one. The people saw the goat, which had their sins passed on to it through the laying on of Aaron's hands, departing bearing those sins. It is not that a sinner vaguely thinks in his heart that his sins have disappeared; rather, through the sacrifice God appointed, he passes his sins on to the offering and obtains remission. In this sacrifice of the laying on of hands and blood, look to the work of Christ, who would save us.

The Day of Atonement that comes around every year and the response of the people

Even after the live goat has been sent away, the service continues. Aaron takes off the linen garments, washes his body, and puts on his own garments. Then he offers the burnt offering for himself and for the people, and burns the fat of the sin offering on the altar. The skins, flesh, and offal of the bull and the goat whose blood went into the sanctuary are burned outside the camp. For the man who sent away the goat and the man who burned the offerings there is also the ordinance of washing their clothes and bathing their bodies.

The Day of Atonement is the tenth day of the seventh month in the calendar of Israel. The Bible text commands the people, *"You shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all" (Leviticus 16:29)*. They had to humble themselves before God and rest from work. The stranger who dwells among them also

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joins in this ordinance. Atonement does not end as a technical task the priest carries out alone. The whole congregation had to examine themselves before God and keep the day He appointed.

Leviticus says that on this day the people become clean from all their sins before God. There is no need to regard that grace as something small. At the same time, this service was repeated every year. The passing of one year's Day of Atonement did not make the next year's Day of Atonement disappear. Even when the high priest changed, the one who succeeded him had to take up the service again.

At this point the question of Hebrews comes to us. What relation does the sacrifice repeated every year have to the perfect atonement that was to come? When we open Hebrews after having faithfully read the ordinance of Leviticus, the reality of the same sacrifices continuing and the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ are clearly distinguished.

The once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, who offered His own body

Hebrews chapter 9 explains that Christ came as High Priest and accomplished eternal atonement with His own blood. Aaron went in with the blood of animals for himself and for the people. Christ did not rely on the blood of another offering but offered Himself to God. He appears before God for us, beyond the sanctuary made with hands.

Hebrews chapter 10 says that in the sacrifices offered every year there is a reminder of sins. This is because the blood of animals in itself does not have the power to remove sins forever. This word is not a claim that the old ordinance God gave had no meaning. It is an explanation that Jesus Christ

accomplished the perfect salvation that ordinance pointed to. The purpose of learning the shadow lies in recognizing the One the shadow points to.

Jesus came to do the will of God and offered His body once for all. Hebrews places side by side the priests who stand daily and offer the same sacrifices, and Christ, who sat down at the right hand of God after offering one sacrifice. *"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14)*. The effect of the sacrifice offered once is eternal. That sacrifice does not become imperfect because time passes after we receive the remission of sins or because weakness is revealed again. The One who sanctified us is the Lord, who offered His own body.

Hebrews 10:18 declares, *"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin."* The sacrifice of Christ does not begin again because our feelings waver. The basis of salvation is not the size of the relief we feel on that day but the work of Christ, who gave Himself. That is why the assurance of the remission of sins deepens by hearing and believing what He has accomplished, rather than growing from looking long only into one's own heart.

The remission of sins learned from the laying on of hands and the baptism of Jesus

We will look further at the relationship, which we examined in the previous chapter, between the laying on of hands and baptism through the two goats of the Day of Atonement. The laying on of hands and the shedding of blood in this service are a type that shows the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross. Just as in the Old Testament the sins

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of the people were placed on the offering, Jesus bore the sin of mankind when He received baptism, and on the Cross He received the judgment for that sin. The salvation in which we receive the eternal remission of sins by believing in both the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The baptism is not an incidental event that appears briefly in the life of Jesus. For a sinless offering to die in place of the sinner, it first had to have the sins passed on to it. Jesus, too, bore the sin of the world by being baptized by John, and so received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. If we leave out the baptism and speak only of the death on the Cross, we cannot explain how our sins were transferred onto Him. We must believe together in the salvation the Lord accomplished through His baptism, the blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death.

The sin of the world the Lord bore includes all the sins we commit from the time we are born until we die. He bore not only the sins we have already committed but also the sins we commit today and the sins we will commit as we go on living. In the Old Testament the Day of Atonement came around every year, but Jesus had all the sins from the beginning of mankind to the end of the world passed on to Him once and for all. My sins, too, are within that sin of the world. No part of our lives is left outside the atonement the Lord accomplished.

Therefore the person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins. It is not a status obtained because the deeds of the flesh have become perfect. Because Jesus took on all our sins and received their judgment in full, we have become people without sin by faith. Do not measure this salvation again by the mood of your heart or the diligence of this one day

today. The basis on which we become children of God and draw near to Him lies in the righteousness of the Lord, who has made us perfect.

To understand this connection, we must look together at the word each passage conveys. Leviticus chapter 16 specifies the confessing of sins and the placing of them on the live goat. Matthew chapter 3 records that Jesus received baptism from John in order to fulfill all righteousness. In John 1:29 John points to Jesus and testifies, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* 1 John chapter 5 speaks together of Christ, who came by water and blood, and the witness of the Spirit.

The laying on of hands of the Old Testament and the baptism of the New Testament are connected in this way as the work of salvation that passes on sin. It is not that Matthew repeats and records the procedure of laying on both hands and confessing sins in Leviticus just as it is. But the baptism Jesus received in order to fulfill all righteousness is the actual work of salvation that fulfilled the meaning of the Old Testament sacrifices. Just as sins were passed on to the offering through the laying on of hands and that offering died in place of the sinner, Jesus bore sin through His baptism and shed His blood and was judged. When we believe the word that the Lord took away the sin of the world, we must also know and believe how He bore that sin.

John, who baptized Jesus on behalf of mankind

In this work of salvation, John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind, was entrusted with the task of baptizing Jesus and passing the sin of the world on to Him.

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Jesus called John the greatest among those born of women, and said, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:11–13)*. He also revealed that the Elijah who was to come is John. John, whom God had promised beforehand and sent, testified at the end of the Old Testament to the Christ who was to come, and performed the representative work of passing the sin of mankind on to Him.

Remember here the sight of the high priest laying hands on the offering on behalf of the congregation. It was not that all the people put their hands on the head of the offering all at one time; the high priest, their representative, confessed their sins and passed them on. When Jesus received baptism, too, John, whom God had sent, represented mankind. Here is the reason we explain the baptismal work of John in connection with the office of the high priest.

Luke chapter 1 introduces John's father Zacharias as a priest of the division of Abijah, and his mother Elizabeth as a descendant of Aaron. John was born into a priestly family, and, being sent by God, prepared the way of the Lord. The work by which he passed on sin on behalf of mankind must be distinguished from the actual position of high priest of the temple in Jerusalem.

Luke 3:1–3 records that in the days of the high priests Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John in the wilderness. This is not a story that John was installed in the high priesthood of the temple in their place. The work entrusted to John was to baptize Jesus on behalf of mankind and to testify that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The meaning of salvation God showed through the laying on of hands of the Old Testament was fulfilled through this work.

The One whom Hebrews presents as the High Priest who accomplished eternal atonement is Jesus Christ. The testimony of John leads people to Him. Examining the family and the mission of John, we must clearly know the one who testifies and the One who accomplishes salvation. Place your faith in Jesus Christ, of whom John testified.

Drawing near to God relying on the completed atonement

After finishing its explanation of the sacrifices, Hebrews exhorts its readers to draw near to God. This is because we have obtained boldness to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, and He has opened *"a new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20)* for us. We must draw near with a true heart and in full assurance of faith, and hold fast the confession of our hope. The teaching of atonement does not stop at the knowledge of knowing well the old procedures of the tabernacle but moves the faith of today.

We must not make prayers of repentance a means of new atonement. It is not that Jesus is baptized again and dies on the Cross again each time we commit a wrong. Nor can our earnestness or the number of our prayers pay the price of sin. Believe the fact that the Lord bore through His baptism even the personal sins we commit every day, and received their judgment on the Cross. We must turn away from the mindset that tries to achieve a new atonement by repeatedly asking for sins to be washed away, and draw near to God relying on the salvation already accomplished.

When we discover our wrongs, we must admit that they are wrong. Examine your heart and your deeds in the light of the

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word of the Bible, turn from the wrong way, and receive the guidance of the Lord. At the same time, we must believe that the Lord bore that sin, too. Washing the heart by faith in this way, remembering the baptism of Jesus, is the faith needed every day. It is not hiding one's sins or insisting that there are none, but believing in the salvation of the Lord, who took all those sins away.

The person who believes in the perfect remission of sins treasures that grace. Hebrews chapter 10 exhorts us to stir up love and good works in one another and to make every effort to assemble together, and sternly warns against trampling the Son of God underfoot and despising the blood of the covenant and the Spirit of grace. Do not abandon the gospel, using your weakness as an excuse. We must hear the word within the church, encourage one another's faith, and serve together the Lord, who saved us.

The laying on of hands on the Day of Atonement shows the way sin is passed on, and the blood of the offering shows the judgment on sin. Jesus received baptism from John and bore the sins of our whole lifetime, and received their judgment with His own body. We who believe in Him are righteous people who have obtained the eternal remission of sins, and children of God. Draw near to God with this assurance. In the next chapter, through the ordinances of the daily burnt offering, the ransom money, and the holy anointing oil, we will look at the life in which we, who have obtained new life, hear the word and have fellowship every day and serve the gospel following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Questions for Reflection

1. What role does each of the two goats of the Day of Atonement play? Explain how the passing on of sin through the laying on of hands and the meaning of the shedding of blood were fulfilled in the baptism and the Cross of Jesus.

2. What mission did John receive to represent mankind? Read Matthew 11:11–14 and Luke 1:5–17, and distinguish his representative work from the position of high priest of the temple.

3. What assurance does the faith that the Lord bore all the sins of our whole lifetime once and for all give us when we discover our own wrongs today? How does admitting and setting right a wrong differ from prayers of repentance that try to obtain a new atonement? ✉

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Chapter 17

Daily worship and holy separation

Read Together Exodus 25:1–9; 29:1–9, 31–34; 38:25–28 · Mark 10:45 · Hebrews 9:14; 10:10–18 · Romans 6:23; 12:1–13 · 1 Peter 1:15–21

< Exodus 29:38–46 >

"Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering. And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by My glory. So I will consecrate the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. I will also consecrate both Aaron and his sons to minister to Me as priests. I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am the LORD their God."

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< Exodus 30:11–16 >

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the LORD, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them. 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. Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD. The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves. And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of meeting, that it may be a memorial for the children of Israel before the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.'"

< Exodus 30:22–33 >

"Moreover the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Also take for yourself quality spices—five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty shekels), two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and

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the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on man's flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds any like it, or whoever puts any of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people.'"

Once-for-all salvation and daily service

In the previous chapter we read the word that Christ offered Himself once for all and accomplished eternal atonement. Then what meaning does the worship of a saved person have? Seeking and serving God every day is not repeating the atonement already accomplished. The word of Hebrews 9:14, that we have been cleansed to serve the living God, tells us the direction.

Now we will go back to Exodus again and look at the daily burnt offering, the ransom money, and the anointing oil. The daily burnt offering is the sacrifice offered at the appointed times, and the ransom money is the ransom price for life that each person pays when the number of the people is taken. The anointing oil is the oil that sets apart as holy the tabernacle of meeting, the furnishings, and the priests. Reading each ordinance in turn, we will learn the grace that has made us live and the life of serving God within that grace.

In the large context in which these ordinances are placed, there is the promise that God will dwell among the people. God does not make Himself known as One who visits briefly only on special days. The One who brought Israel out of Egypt says that He will be their God and dwell among them. The times of worship, the attitude toward life, and even the things used in service are placed within this relationship.

We, too, easily remember only the times we experienced great grace as the important moments of faith. But the word of the tabernacle shows the life of serving God on ordinary days as well. While morning comes and evening falls, and while they take on the work of the community and prepare together what is needed, the people belong to God. Holiness does not depend only on special feelings; it is connected with the life of hearing the word of the One who dwells among us.

The burnt offering offered in the morning and in the evening

Exodus 29:38–41 commands that two lambs of the first year be offered every day. One is offered in the morning, and the other in the evening. It is an ordinance of offering them divided between the two times of the day, not of offering both at one time. Even after the consecration of the priests is finished, the service continues. The office undertaken before God had to be performed every day.

What is to be offered together with the lamb is also fixed. One-tenth of an ephah of fine flour and one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil are added, and one-fourth of a hin of wine is offered as a drink offering. A drink offering is a gift offered by pouring out a liquid. In the evening, too, the same grain offering and

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drink offering are offered as in the morning. Since the grain offering is a gift offered from grain, we may read the lamb that is the offering, the grain, the oil, and the wine, distinguishing each of them.

The text says to make it a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. Since the kinds, amounts, and times of the offerings were given by the word, the people had to serve relying on the offerings and the method God had appointed. Reading about this sacrifice, we remember Jesus Christ, who gave His life for us. Because the way to draw near to God was opened by His salvation, today, too, we can give thanks for that grace and offer our lives.

We must not read this daily burnt offering as meaning that every Israelite individually offered a lamb morning and evening. It is a service God appointed to be offered continually in the tabernacle. It also differs from the yearly Day of Atonement of the previous chapter. The daily burnt offering and the yearly Day of Atonement were ordinances each with its own time and procedure, and only when we remember this distinction can we also rightly understand the explanation of Hebrews about repeated sacrifices.

God, who meets and speaks in worship

Exodus 29:42–43 tells of, together with the command to offer the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of meeting throughout their generations, the promise that God will meet Israel and speak to Moses. The explanation of the sacrifice leads to meeting and the word. God is not described as One who only watches from afar the people offering their

sacrifices. He speaks to Moses and has the people live following His word.

In the words that follow, who sanctifies is revealed repeatedly. God sanctifies that place by His glory, and consecrates the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and Aaron and his sons. The preparation and service entrusted to the people are actually necessary. But the final basis that produces the holiness of the tabernacle does not lie in the skill or zeal of people. God appoints that place as the place for His presence and for serving Him.

At the end of this promise, God says that He will dwell among Israel and be their God. He also reveals the purpose for which He brought them out of Egypt. Salvation and presence are connected, and presence and worship are connected. To know who God is and to live together with Him is the purpose of learning the ordinances of sacrifice.

Our worship today, too, is the time of receiving this grace into our hearts every day. Even though we have received the remission of all sins through the baptism and the Cross of Jesus, the weakness of the flesh does not disappear by itself. When we hold our thoughts up to the word, wrong judgments and greed are revealed. We must admit them, draw near to the Lord, and believe again in the salvation of the Lord, who bore even this sin. To worship every day is not to accomplish a new atonement but to live hearing the word of the Lord, who has already saved us, and receiving His guidance.

Earlier, in the consecration of the priests, bread made of fine flour was offered, and Aaron and his sons ate the flesh of the ram of the consecration and the bread (Exodus 29:1–2, 31–34). For flour to become fine, the grains of wheat must be broken. We who serve God must also cast away the heart that insists that only our own thoughts are right. We must not put

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forward only our talents and knowledge, but submit to the word and follow the will of the Lord. This is the attitude with which a saved person learns to serve.

Also, we do not live shut up alone in our own faults. Within the church we share together the salvation the Lord has given, admit our own shortcomings, and receive the guidance of the word. Fellowship is not covering up one another's wrongs as if they were right, or digging up only the faults of others. It is that we, who have the same weakness, hold up to the word what is wrong, correct what must be corrected, and believe together in the Lord, who has perfectly saved such people as we are. In fellowship, share the food of salvation and gain the strength to follow the Lord.

The half shekel that the rich and the poor pay together

Exodus 30:11–16 commands that the ransom money for life be paid when the number of the children of Israel is taken. Those twenty years old and above who are included in the census give half a shekel according to the shekel of the sanctuary. The shekel was a unit of weight at that time, and the text explains that one shekel is twenty gerahs. What is important here is not how much it is in today's money but the fact that everyone takes part according to the standard God appointed.

The command follows that the rich are not to give more and the poor are not to give less. Even though their circumstances differ, in this ordinance they pay the same half shekel. It is not a way in which a person with much property obtains a higher qualification of life, or a poor person is treated as a life of

lower worth. Through this identical amount, think of the fact that the life of each person is precious before God. We must not evaluate a person's life by the size of his property.

The text says that the ransom money is to be given so that there may be no plague among them when they are numbered. The ransom money for life does not stop at being merely a rule for sharing the costs of the community. It has the solemn meaning that the price of life must be given before God. Life is precious, but a sinner cannot save his own life by himself. This ordinance makes us ask what we must rely on to be able to live before God.

The ransom money collected is used for the service of the tabernacle of meeting. The explanation also follows that He makes it a memorial for Israel before God. In Exodus chapter 38 we can confirm the fact that the silver received from those who were numbered was used for the sockets of the boards of the sanctuary, the sockets of the pillars of the veil, the hooks for the pillars, and so on. The sockets of the veil are the sockets of the pillars that support the veil. The silver each person gave was used for the facilities with which the community served God. We must read together the meaning of the ransom money for life and its use for the service of the tabernacle.

Jesus Christ, who paid the price of our life

The freewill offering of Exodus chapter 25, which we looked at earlier, and the ransom money of chapter 30 are both given to God, but they are not the same ordinance. In the offering of the materials of the tabernacle, the willing heart is emphasized, and in the ransom money at the census, those who give and the amount are fixed. We must not make the half-

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shekel ransom money a basis for demanding the same offering of money from everyone today. What we must know deeply from this word is the price that must be paid to make a sinner's life live.

We were born in sin as descendants of Adam and have actually lived committing sins. The Bible says, *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. Before the justice of God the price of sin is death. Even if a person gives all his property, he cannot make his soul live, and even if he piles up good deeds, he cannot remove the judgment of the sins he has already committed. We need a Savior who will pay the price of sin in our place.

The One who became that ransom for life is Jesus Christ. The Lord came to this earth in the body of a man and, by receiving baptism from John, bore all our sin. And by bearing those sins and dying on the Cross, He offered His life before God the Father. He received in our place the judgment of sin that we had to receive, and rose again from death and saved us. His having sins passed on to Him through His baptism and His paying their price, death, on the Cross lead to one salvation.

Now we draw near to God by believing in Jesus Christ. To give the ransom money for life by faith is to accept the price of life that Jesus has already paid for me. It is not sacrificing the Lord again, or my adding another price. The person who believes, as his Savior, in Jesus, who took on my sin and died in my place, receives the remission of sins and obtains new life. Both the rich and the poor live by this same salvation.

Jesus said that He had come to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). 1 Peter chapter 1 also tells us that our redemption was accomplished not with silver or gold but with the precious blood of Christ. Salvation was given to us freely

because the Lord paid the price in full. We who believe have escaped from the place where we had to die for sin and have become children of God.

This new life does not end with the heart being set at ease for a moment. We have the kingdom of God, where we will live forever with the Lord. Look to the new heavens and the new earth the Lord promised. Even if what we have now is little, or we go through hardship serving the Lord, that hope does not disappear. Because there is the Lord, who paid the price of life and made us live, today, too, we can believe in Him and serve the gospel.

The holy anointing oil applied so as to belong to God

From Exodus 30:22 comes the command to make the holy anointing oil. The anointing oil is the oil used when a person or a furnishing is established to serve God by applying the set-apart oil to it. God has them prepare, as quality spices, five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cinnamon, two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, and five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and take a hin of olive oil. He has these compounded according to the art of the perfumer.

Myrrh and cinnamon, cane and cassia, and olive oil are each different materials. But gathered and compounded as God appointed, they become the holy anointing oil. First remember this actual method of making it. The fact that He gathered different materials and made them fit for one use also helps us

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understand the service of each of us and the unity of the church, which we will look at later.

This anointing oil is applied to the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony, the table and its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering with their utensils, and the laver and its base. It is also applied to Aaron and his sons, and they are entrusted with the office of priest. The furnishings we looked at one by one earlier appear here together as objects set apart so as to belong to God. The space of the tabernacle and the service of the priests are placed under the same purpose.

God set apart as most holy the furnishings to which the anointing oil was applied, and said, *"You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy" (Exodus 30:29)*. This holy oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. Just as He set apart the tabernacle of meeting and the priests so as to belong to God, in us, too, who have received the remission of sins today by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit dwells and leads us to do the work of God. It is not that our flesh was righteous by nature and so became holy. The Lord washed away our sins and made us people who belong to God.

The meaning of this anointing oil leads to our life of serving the gospel. We are people used in this world like the holy ointment. Through us, the person who hears and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and becomes holy. It is not that we have the power to remove that person's sins. When we preach the salvation Jesus accomplished, the person who believes in that gospel obtains new life as we have.

Just as several spices were gathered into one anointing oil, within the church people whose tasks differ also serve together

for the same gospel. There are those who preach the word and write, and there are also those who prepare food, clean, and repair equipment. Through the labor of making and sending books, the gospel is delivered even to people not met in person. It is not a work accomplished by the talent of any one person alone. God uses the labor of each person together to preach the word of life to souls. Do not think little of yourself because you have been given a small task. The gospel we serve together is being used in the work of saving people from sin.

Distinguishing the holy oil from everyday oil

In the command about the anointing oil there are also boundaries of use. He forbids making oil for private use with the same composition, or applying it to a person who is not permitted. Nor may it be used on a person's body like ordinary oil. The command to apply it to the priests and this prohibition do not contradict each other. It is a word that distinguishes applying it to the person God designated, for the service He designated, from anyone using it for a general purpose.

The text attaches the stern warning that the person who violates this will be cut off from his people. Just because it had a good fragrance and its materials were precious, not just anyone could take it and use it. The attitude toward what is holy required the obedience that respects the purpose God appointed. Keeping the boundaries of use was also part of worship.

The oil used in the morning and evening sacrifices and the anointing oil must also be distinguished. Oil goes into the grain offering offered together with the daily burnt offering. Olive oil goes into the anointing oil as well, but that does not mean that

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all oil has the same ceremony and function. The anointing oil is a holy oil with its appointed spices, composition, and objects of use. They cannot be used interchangeably on the grounds that some of their materials overlap.

In this way the holy anointing oil was used for the purpose God appointed. The hearts and lives of us who have been saved also belong to the Lord. We must not change the gospel for our own greed, or regard material things and honor as more precious than the Lord. We must keep as precious the gospel of the water and the Spirit we have received and preach it just as it is.

In particular, it cannot be called the same gospel when one leaves out the baptism of Jesus and preaches only His death. The Lord bore the sin of the world by receiving baptism and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. Preach in full this salvation that has made us holy. Using rightly the things and the finances entrusted and treasuring the service of others must also be done within the purpose of serving this gospel together. Engrave on your heart the word not to change and use what is holy according to our own thinking.

Serving together with a life that has received grace

For what should the person who has obtained new life live? It is a great blessing to have received the remission of sins through the baptism and the Cross of Jesus and to be able to serve the gospel together with the church. Not only preaching or evangelizing, but also the labor of preparing food, cleaning, and taking on what is needed is serving the gospel together. Serve, giving thanks for this grace, each in the place entrusted to you.

Being saved does not mean that all the weakness of the flesh disappears. But the righteousness of God, who saved us, is perfect. We who believe in the baptism and the blood of Jesus are righteous people who have received the remission of sins even in the midst of our shortcomings. When you discover a wrong, admit it and receive the guidance of the word, but do not regard even the salvation the Lord has given as having disappeared.

The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, leads us to do righteous work. If we follow the desires of the flesh as they are, we can still give ourselves over to evil work. Therefore we must set our hearts according to the word and offer our bodies and our time to the gospel. When we serve the Lord led by the Holy Spirit, God gives our hearts the joy and peace of faith. This does not mean that we are always elated and never tired at all. Even on hard and lacking days, the grace of serving righteous work together in God and in the church holds us up.

Romans chapter 12 also exhorts us, on the basis of the mercies of God, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This devotion is not a sacrifice that replaces or supplements the atonement of Christ. It is the response of a person who has received grace, offering his life to God. When we read the exhortations that follow about the many members and the different gifts, and about love, prayer, and sharing, we see how that response appears within the community.

Draw near before the word every day, believe in the Lord, who paid the price of our life, and serve the gospel together following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Do not, forgetting the grace you have received, try to live alone by your own strength. We must unite our hearts with the church, eat the food of the word and fellowship, and keep the faith until the day the

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Lord comes. This service, by which others also obtain the remission of sins through us, is a great blessing given to the saved person.

The daily burnt offering, the ransom money for life, and the anointing oil are each different ordinances, but they show the will of God, who saves us and has us live as His own people. We who have received this grace serve the gospel together like the holy ointment. In the next chapter we will look at the hands and the wisdom of the people who actually make the tabernacle, and learn more concretely about serving together with the ability received from God.

Questions for Reflection

1. Even though the atonement of the Lord was accomplished once and for all, why must we worship every day and eat the food of the word and fellowship? Think about how admitting our own shortcomings and believing in the perfect remission of sins are done together.

2. Why is ransom money needed to make a sinner's life live? Following the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, explain what it means to believe in the price of life the Lord paid.

3. What kind of life is serving the gospel like the anointing oil? When we unite with the church following the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how can the service now entrusted to me be used in the work of others hearing the gospel and obtaining the remission of sins? ✉

Chapter 18

The hands and the wisdom entrusted with the work of God

Read Together Exodus 35:20–29 · Ephesians 2:8–10

< Exodus 31:1–11 >

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you: the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furniture of the tabernacle— the table and its utensils, the pure gold lampstand with all its utensils, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base— the garments of ministry, the holy garments for Aaron the priest and the garments of his sons, to minister as priests, and the

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anointing oil and sweet incense for the holy place. According to all that I have commanded you they shall do.'"

< Exodus 35:34 >

"And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan."

God prepares the people who will do the work as well

In the previous chapter we looked at the service of the people who belong to God, through the daily burnt offering, the ransom money, and the anointing oil. Now we will turn our eyes to the people who actually make the tabernacle to be used in that service. Even though the measurements and materials of the tabernacle are fixed, hands are needed to actually make it. Who will shape the wood, cut the jewels, and weave the cloth? God not only commands what is to be made but also speaks of the people who will take on that work.

In Exodus 31:2 God says that He has called by name Bezalel, a man of the tribe of Judah. His father is Uri and his grandfather is Hur. This record shows that the work of building the tabernacle did not remain a vague idea. The work God has appointed is entrusted to one person who has a name, a family, and an affiliation. Rather than first introducing that person's achievements, the Bible first tells us the fact that God called him.

Then He appoints Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to work together with Bezalel. Two men from different tribes take on one work. After calling one man, God did not have him bear all the work alone. He places someone to

work together with him, and He also gives wisdom to those who have a wise heart, so that they may make what He has commanded.

This passage widens our view of the work of God. We easily remember the person who speaks in front or the person who leads people. But in the story of making the tabernacle, the people who handle the tools appear with clear names. Work done with the hands also belongs to serving God. Here is the reason not to take lightly the labor that does not catch the eye.

Reading the names of Bezalel and Aholiab, we can look back on our own work. Examine whether you think little of the work entrusted to you because it looks small, or, on the contrary, exalt yourself because you have been entrusted with important work. The One who is revealed first in the text is God, who calls the workers and gives them wisdom. The place of the worker is the place of responding to that calling.

The wisdom and skill with which the Spirit of God fills a person

The Bible text says in Exodus 31:3 that He filled Bezalel with *"the Spirit of God."* Then it speaks of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and *"all manner of workmanship."* Workmanship here means the actual skill and techniques needed to make the tabernacle. Then come working in gold, silver, and bronze, cutting jewels for setting, and carving wood. Wisdom here is not a thought kept only in the heart. It includes knowing what must be made and how, and even the ability to accomplish that knowledge with the hands.

Hands that work metal and hands that weave cloth need different skills. They must examine the nature of the materials

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and make their assigned part accurately so that it fits together with the other parts. Exodus 35:35 speaks together of the work of the engraver and the designer, the tapestry maker in various colored threads and the weaver, and the designing of artistic works. God uses such various skills in making the sanctuary.

The text does not tell us where or for how many years these men learned their skills. Therefore we cannot change the word that God poured out the Spirit into the meaning that there was no need to learn or practice. What the Bible clearly says is the fact that the source of the wisdom to do that work is God, and that that wisdom appeared in concrete making.

We, too, must have together a heart that relies on God and an attitude of learning the work accurately. A thing made wrongly does not become right merely because it was begun with good intentions. Even in helping someone, the labor of examining so that it will actually be a help is needed. The attitude of learning the entrusted work while praying, and of admitting and correcting what is lacking, reveals faith and sincerity together.

Look again, too, at the abilities familiar to you. Arranging writing, preparing food, and repairing things can be used in serving the gospel. Just as God gave the workers of the tabernacle the wisdom they needed, we, too, must ask the Lord for the wisdom and strength to bear the work of the gospel entrusted to us. Do not step back because the talent you have received is small, or think that because your talent is great you can do it even without the help of the Lord. What the worker needs is not self-confidence that trusts only in his own strength but faith that relies on God, who entrusted him with the work.

It is easy to think in a divided way, that receiving the remission of sins is left to the Lord and the life and service after that must be entirely our own responsibility, by our own

strength. But the Lord, who saved us, is our shepherd and provider. Even after being saved, believe His word and ask for wisdom and help. When the work entrusted to you is blocked and your own shortcomings are revealed, it is not the time to abandon faith but the time to ask for the grace of the Lord. The hands received from God must work with the strength God gives.

From hands that work well to hands that teach

Exodus 35:34 records that God "*put in his heart the ability to teach,*" speaking of Bezalel and Aholiab. God led the two men to teach others. Do not miss the point that teaching is mentioned together with the ability to make. Not all the service of the tabernacle is accomplished only by doing the work well alone. Helping the people who work together to be able to do the work entrusted to them is also needed.

This verse shows wisdom being passed on between people. The ability entrusted to one person does not stay only within that person but makes the labor of others possible. It is not stopping at displaying one's own skill but helping others to grow. In that even the ability to teach is spoken of as given by God, the work of waiting for the one who learns cannot be taken lightly either.

In the community today, too, there are times when every request is piled on the person who has been entrusted with the work for a long time. If the person familiar with it handles it alone, it may be faster for the moment. But if others do not get the opportunity to learn and take part, one person's labor keeps shouldering everyone's needs. Reading this word, we can think

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together of finishing the work well and of raising up people to work together.

The one who teaches needs the generosity to share what he knows. The one who learns needs the humility to listen to the teaching of the one who labored first and to learn faith. Think of the fact that we have heard the word and grown through the labor of those who served the gospel before us within the Church of God. Now we, too, must support others so that they may learn the word and bear the work entrusted to them. If we look for a place where only we stand out, we cannot serve together. When we treasure the labor of raising up others, the gifts we have received are used for the gospel.

We need not think here that the office of priest was also given to the craftsmen of the tabernacle. The work of making the furnishings and garments is distinguished from the work of using them to serve as priests. Just as different offices meet for one purpose, the one who teaches and the one who learns can also serve together, each with his own responsibility.

The standard that skill follows is the word of God

In Exodus 31:7–11 the things the craftsmen must make appear again. The tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat, the table and the pure gold lampstand, the altar of incense and the altar of burnt offering, the laver and the garments of the priests, and even the anointing oil and the incense are included. The lampstand in the Bible text, which we looked at in chapter 10, is the furnishing that holds the oil lamps. The various parts of the tabernacle we learned about earlier lead to the actual work of

these men. The length of the list also shows the fact that all the work cannot be accomplished with one talent alone.

Before and after this list is placed the word to make them as God has commanded. Exodus 36:1 also says that the people who received wisdom and understanding are to work according to what the LORD has commanded. What to make and why to make it are not decided as the worker pleases. The worker must accomplish the will of God in concrete form with the wisdom he has received.

Here skill and obedience appear together. The ability to make things with fine workmanship is precious, but the purpose toward which that ability is directed is also important. Changing the tabernacle in one's own way in order to show off one's skill is different from doing the entrusted work faithfully. The ability God has given must serve the will God has spoken.

The person entrusted with the work of God is not a person who orders others about in order to establish his own name and authority. Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, and we are the members who have received His salvation. The one who works in front also supports the other saints, and the one who works behind also labors for the same gospel. It is not work meant to make servants of men, but work of serving the Lord together. Therefore, the more a person is in front, the more he must teach from the word what must be done for the gospel, and he himself must also obey that word and labor.

Therefore, when we work together, we must not forget the purpose the Lord has entrusted to the church. We must not change the gospel for our own convenience and boasting. Discussing, learning, and correcting methods are also so that this gospel may be preached rightly. Rather than putting your own thinking first and moving separately, hear the word together and bear the work you have received with your heart

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joined to the church. Just as the workers of the tabernacle made one tabernacle according to the pattern God had shown, our various labors, too, must serve the one gospel of salvation.

People who believe the same gospel join their hearts

In Exodus 36:2 Moses calls not only Bezalel and Aholiab but also the people who had received wisdom from God and whose hearts desired to do that work. The ability God gave and the heart that comes forward toward the work appear together. The building of the tabernacle is not the achievement of only the two craftsmen whose names are known. It is a work accomplished together, with many people taking part in the work entrusted to them.

There is also the labor of the people who gave the materials. In Exodus chapter 35 appears the sight of men and women bringing offerings willingly. There are women who spin yarn with their hands, and there are also rulers who bring jewels, oil, and spices. The offerings we looked at in chapter 4 are now passed on to the hands of the workers and used in the actual making. The ones who bring the materials and the ones who handle them need each other's labor.

The lampstand we looked at in chapter 10 is also joined together from one piece of pure gold. The base, the shaft, and the branches, the ornamental knobs and the flowers, are not separated, each showing only its own form. In this figure we see the Church of God. The saints who have the same faith of salvation are united with the Lord and united with one another, and shine the light of the gospel on the world. Both the cooperation of the workers who make the tabernacle together

and the unity of the church shown in the lampstand make us reflect on toward whom our service is directed.

The unity of the church is not merely that people whose personalities match gather together and divide up the work. It begins from believing together how Jesus Christ saved us. Jesus, who is God, came in the flesh, and when He received baptism from John He bore all our sins, and bearing those sins He was judged on the Cross and rose again from death. The people who have received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit serve the same Lord within the Church of God. It is believing together in the work of the Lord, who saved us perfectly, without separating the transfer of sins through the baptism from the judgment of the Cross.

With this faith we preach the gospel to the whole world. It is so that other souls, too, may receive the remission of sins we have received. The labor of the one who translates and the one who arranges the writing, the one who delivers the documents and the one who provides the material things, the one who prepares food and the one who prays, is connected toward one purpose. It is not only the person who stands in front and preaches the word who does the work of the gospel. The person who supports from behind so that the word may be preached also serves the same gospel.

For a flower to be displayed, there must be a calyx. Until someone's faith grows in the church and a new soul hears the word, unseen labor is needed. Jesus sacrificed Himself and became the foundation of salvation for us. Is there any reason for us, who have received that love, to be ashamed of the work of supporting others? Rather than trying to obtain a place where you shine, rejoice in the salvation of Christ being preached. The one who serves first also becomes a flower-

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calyx, and the one who learns also supports others with the faith he has received, and so they grow together.

Each of us individually is lacking. But the Church of God is not a place that preaches the gospel with the talent of one outstanding person alone. God works through the church and uses the many members who believe the same gospel and are united. The labor of preaching the word and the labor of supporting it come together and bear the fruit of souls receiving the remission of sins and growing into workers. Therefore lay down the heart that wants to make your own name known, and bear by faith the work you have received, with your heart joined to the Lord and the church.

There is also the responsibility to stop when there is enough

The people kept bringing freewill offerings every morning. But the craftsmen who were doing the work of the tabernacle come, each from the work he was doing, and report to Moses. What the people are bringing is more than the amount needed to carry out the work that was commanded. So Moses has it proclaimed in the camp that no more offerings for the sanctuary are to be made. Hearing that command, the people stop bringing offerings. This is because the materials already gathered were sufficient for all the work, and more than enough.

In this scene the generous heart of the people and the honest judgment of the workers are seen together. The craftsmen did not merely welcome the fact that much was coming in. They examined the amount needed for the actual work and the amount already received, and made known the fact that it was

sufficient. Moses, too, hearing that report, had the gathering stopped. Gathering more in itself was not the purpose of building the tabernacle.

Respecting a willing heart does not mean only encouraging people to keep giving. It also includes the responsibility to use the entrusted materials according to their purpose and to make the need clearly known. Just because the devotion of the one who gives is great, the one who receives must not lay down the responsibility to explain. In the text both the word requesting giving and the command to stop because there is enough are recorded.

There is no need to make this scene a formula to be applied as it is to every offering of money or every financial situation of today. Here it speaks of the case in which the materials for a fixed work, the making of the tabernacle, became sufficient. But the attitude of examining what is needed, reporting according to the facts, and deciding accordingly raises an important question for our community as well. It is the question of what we are gathering for, and how we are confirming that need.

The faithfulness of a worker is not revealed only by starting many works. It also appears in accomplishing well the entrusted work with what has already been received. Together with the wisdom to examine what more must be done, the wisdom to know what is sufficient is needed. The hands and wisdom received from God are used when making, when reporting, and when stopping.

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We work by the grace of salvation and wait for the fruit of the Lord

When we think of the reason we labor together, we must not forget the order of salvation and service. Ephesians 2:8–10, after speaking of the salvation received by grace through faith, explains the life created in Christ for good works. It is not that we obtain salvation by doing much work. The Lord, who has already saved us, uses us for good works.

Because Jesus removed all our sins through the baptism and the Cross, we who believe in that salvation are righteous people who have received the remission of sins. This status was not obtained because the ability of the flesh is outstanding or because mistakes have disappeared. The Lord saved us, who are still lacking, and made us the people of God. Therefore we must not deny the remission of sins because of our own shortcomings, or, on the contrary, cover up wrongs on the grounds that we have become righteous. We must admit our shortcomings, believe the word of salvation, and ask for the help of the Lord.

Our hearts, too, must continue to be filled with the word. Do not regard the gospel you believed when you were saved as merely a foundation of the past. When we reflect on how Jesus bore our sins and received their judgment, the assurance of salvation to convey to others also becomes clear. We must serve with faith that believes the word of God. If we push on only with human zeal and grow weary, we come to think that everything has ended at the place where our own strength ran out. But when we set our hearts on the Lord, we can look at the work God does even through us who are lacking.

In the labor of serving the gospel in unity there is the fruit God gives. Even a soul we have never met can hear the word

that has been preached and receive the remission of sins. That person again preaches the gospel with the same faith and grows into a worker. This work is not a work of making an individual's name great but a work of making known the salvation of God. God delights in the labor served by faith and also gives a reward for that labor. It is not that we pay the price of the remission of sins in order to receive a reward; rather, to those already saved He adds even the grace and the fruit of serving the gospel.

The one who teaches and the one who learns, the one who gives the materials and the one who handles them, are together. Do not take lightly one member because the form of what is entrusted to him differs. The salvation we have received is also one, and the gospel to preach is also one. Without establishing our own excellence, let us bear the work the Lord has entrusted to us, united with the church. Even the labor of small hands becomes precious service when it is connected to this gospel.

But even the hands that make the tabernacle have a time to stop. Exodus chapter 31, after speaking of the wisdom of the workers, immediately commands the Sabbath. God is the One who entrusts work, and the One who gives rest. The Lord, who removed our sins, gives peace to the believing heart, and to us who serve the gospel on this earth He also promises the eternal rest to be enjoyed at the last. In the next chapter we will look at the way of living today believing in the Lord, who gave that rest.

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Questions for Reflection

1. How does the fact that the workers to whom God gave wisdom made the tabernacle together change the attitude with which I look at the ability I have received and the labor of others?

2. How does believing the same gospel of the water and the Spirit and being united with the church differ from simply dividing up the work? With what labor can I become a flower-calyx of the gospel?

3. How does working in order to obtain salvation differ from serving the gospel as a righteous person who has received the remission of sins? When your own strength is lacking, whom should you rely on, and what fruit should you wait for? ✉

Chapter 19

The rest God gives

Read Together Genesis 2:1–3 · Deuteronomy 5:12–15 · Hebrews 4:1–11 · Colossians 2:16–17

< Exodus 31:12–18 >

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'' And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."

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< Exodus 35:1–3 >

“Then Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said to them, ‘These are the words which the LORD has commanded you to do: Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.’”

God speaks of rest together with the tabernacle

In the previous chapter we met the people to whom God gave wisdom and skill. They made the tabernacle, taught the people who would work together with them, and used the materials they had received. But at the end of Exodus chapter 31, God commands them to keep the Sabbath. God, who had them build the tabernacle, also gives the people rest. Here we must think of the purpose of God, who saves. God washes sinners and makes them His own people, and has those people enjoy rest in Him.

Exodus 31:13 says that the Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel that will continue throughout their generations. It is a sign that makes them know that God is the LORD who sanctifies them. It is not that the people produce holiness by their own labor and bring it to God. God sanctifies them, and the people must believe in that God and keep the rest He has given.

In this ordinance there is a command to actually stop working. In Exodus chapter 35, too, Moses tells of the Sabbath first before speaking of the offerings for the tabernacle. On that day he commands, “*You shall kindle no fire throughout your*

dwellings." Even the work of making the tabernacle is under the order God appointed. We cannot ignore His word on the grounds that we are doing holy work.

God made the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. The people rest, remembering the work God accomplished. In Deuteronomy chapter 5 He also has them remember the grace by which He saved them from the life in which they were slaves in Egypt. He has not only them but also their children, their servants, their livestock, and even the stranger rest together. The rest of the saved people does not stop at only being at ease by themselves.

Now let us examine this rest in the light of the salvation Christ accomplished. If God has removed all our sins, we have no need to begin again the labor of removing sin. We obtain rest of heart by believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished. We also wait for the final rest to be enjoyed in the eternal kingdom God has prepared for His people. The rest placed at the end of the word of the tabernacle leads us to that grace of salvation and that hope.

The perfect remission of sins given through the baptism and the Cross

If a person is carrying sin, his heart cannot be at ease. Even if he tries to forget his wrongs or covers them over with busy work, he cannot avoid the fact that he must stand before God. We believe in Jesus because He is the One who saves us from sin. If, while believing in Jesus, we think that He has not removed my sins, we are believing in the Savior while not accepting His salvation.

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God loved us and sent Jesus Christ to this earth. When Jesus received baptism from John, He bore all our sins. This bearing of sin is called transfer. The sins were passed on to Jesus. The remission of sins is not a matter of taking our sins lightly or pretending they are not there. Jesus actually had those sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He was judged on the Cross.

Therefore we must not believe in the baptism and the Cross separated from each other. Jesus, who bore our sins through the baptism, paid the price of those sins on the Cross. To believe in the baptism of Jesus is to believe that He bore all my sins, and to believe in the blood of the Cross is to believe that He received the judgment of those sins in my place. It is one salvation accomplished with water and blood.

The sin of the world the Lord bore contains all the sins we commit during our whole lifetime. It is not that He bore only the sins before we were saved and left the sins after that for us to wash away by our own strength. He bore all the sins we commit from birth until we leave this world, and received the judgment. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins. He has become one of the people of God without sin, not because his own deeds are perfect, but because the Lord accomplished perfect salvation.

In Matthew 3:13–17 Jesus, receiving baptism from John, says that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness. 1 John 5:6 speaks of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, and verses 7–8 of the Spirit, who bears witness, and the agreeing witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Hebrews 10:10–18 tells of the sacrifice of Christ, who offered Himself once for all, and of the remission of sins. In the heart that believes in this salvation there is the rest God has given. Offerings of

money or good deeds, prayers of repentance or feelings cannot make that salvation more perfect.

We keep the rest of heart by believing the gospel every day

Even after receiving the remission of sins, there is weakness in our flesh. We sometimes hurt others with words, and greed and hatred sometimes arise in our hearts. Saying that we have become righteous does not mean that we no longer need to admit such wrongs as wrongs. Nor does it mean that the flesh has become perfect. We must admit our wrongs honestly.

But when we realize our sins, where should we return? We must not leave the salvation the Lord accomplished and try to remove sin again by our own deeds. We must believe that when Jesus received baptism He bore even this sin I committed today, and that on the Cross He received its judgment as well. It is accepting now, in my heart, the remission of sins already accomplished.

In chapter 7 we looked at the laver. The priests washed their hands and feet when they served. We, too, admit our own sins and uncleanness that are revealed as we live in the world, and obtain cleanness of heart by believing the word that Jesus washed all those sins away through His baptism. It is not that the Lord must receive baptism again or be hung on the Cross again. It is hearing again, reflecting on, and believing the salvation He accomplished once and for all.

Making prayers of repentance the price of washing away sin or a means of new atonement is different from admitting one's own wrongs and believing in the remission of sins

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already accomplished. We must not hide sin, nor, after admitting sin, try to wash it away with our own tears and resolutions. Admit that you did wrong, and believe in the baptism and the blood of the Lord, who bore even that sin. With this faith we keep the rest of heart before God.

The gospel is not basic knowledge that we hear when we are first saved and then graduate from. Even saved saints must keep hearing the gospel. When our own sins press on our hearts, we must hear again and believe the word that Jesus took those sins away. If the church speaks only of the labors of life and self-denial and does not let people hear the gospel of the baptism and the Cross, with what will the saints keep the cleanness of heart and the assurance of salvation?

The Church of God must serve so that the saints may hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and live within it. When that gospel is heard, the Holy Spirit works and gives the heart joy and new strength. Only when there is the rest of the remission of sins in our own hearts can we preach this salvation to others as well. The gospel that saved us holds us up today as well, and establishes us as workers to serve the gospel.

We set our hearts on the Lord and receive His supply

A lamp receives the supply of oil through its wick and gives light. Thinking of this figure, examine where our hearts are placed. If we have received the remission of sins from the Lord but try to live the life after that only by the ability of the world and our own calculations, our hearts cannot help always being dragged around by those circumstances. We must not think of

the Lord as if He were One who only saves us and is of no help at all in our lives.

We must set our hearts on the Lord. The Lord, who saved us, is our shepherd and protector, and the One who gives us the strength and wisdom we need. Just as you believed the word of salvation, believe His help and His promises as well. Tell the Lord what you are worrying about, and wait while hearing the word. The Lord leads our hearts to faith and gives us the strength to bear the work entrusted to us.

This is not a training of repeating to oneself inwardly that one is at peace. It is faith that relies on the Lord, who has actually removed sin, the Lord, who gives us life and the word. Do not separate the fact that God has remitted your sins from the fact that God takes care of your life. The same Lord saves us and leads us.

When you feel that your faith is weak, do not try to solve it by yourself by leaving the church. Have fellowship with the saints who hear the same word of salvation, and receive the help of those who serve ahead of you by faith. It is not making people's talents and strength themselves the savior, but believing His word together within the church of the Lord. When we set our hearts on the Lord and unite with the church, we can ask for the grace we need and serve the gospel.

Do not, through unbelief, throw away the rest the Lord has given

Exodus 31:14–15 warns of death and of being cut off from among the people for the person who profanes the Sabbath or does work on that day. It is a solemn word that the ordinance of the covenant given to Israel cannot be taken lightly. Reading

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that warning, we must look back on whether we are taking lightly the salvation God accomplished and the rest He has given.

If, even though God has remitted all sins, a person does not believe that fact and tries to remove sin with his own good deeds and prayers of repentance, that person is not accepting the rest God gives. The work of the remission of sins was accomplished by the Lord. With a faith that tries to produce a new salvation by one's own efforts, one cannot enter the rest the Lord has given. We must believe in the perfect salvation of Christ.

Hebrews chapter 4 warns of the people who heard the word but did not profit from it because it was not connected with faith. It speaks of the rest that remains for the people of God, beyond the rest Joshua gave, and exhorts us to be diligent so as not to follow the example of disobedience. The fact of knowing the promise of rest alone is not enough. We must believe in the Lord, who promised. We cannot think that we will enjoy the final rest while refusing the remission of sins He accomplished.

Even a saved person must not regard the gospel as only a thing of the past. If we do not admit our weakness, and do not believe in the baptism and the blood of Jesus even when we realize our sins, our hearts are pressed down by sin again and lose the peace of salvation. It is not because we must make atonement anew, but because we have left the faith that believes in the salvation already accomplished. Hear this warning and hold the gospel of the water and the Spirit all the more in your heart. We must not change the gospel into something else or throw it away, but hear and believe that word and keep the rest.

Such spiritual warnings are not a basis for the church today to carry out physical punishment on people. We must hear with

distinction the punishment given to Israel under the covenant of Mount Sinai and the exhortation to believe in the completed salvation and keep the rest. To look back on ourselves with a heart that fears the word of God, and to help other saints also stand within the faith of the gospel, is our task.

A life of serving diligently and resting together

Saying that there is no need to work more for the remission of sins does not mean doing no work at all in daily life either. We leave the work of removing sin to the Lord, and we must diligently bear by faith the work entrusted to us. The one who studies must study, the one who works at a workplace must do that work faithfully, and the one who serves the gospel must bear the work entrusted to him. We must not confuse salvation with daily life and dress up laziness as faith.

At the same time, the body also needs rest. God said to work for six days and to rest. Nor must we demand that the people who work together with us not rest, on the grounds that there is much work in serving the church. The person who has labored preparing worship and caring for the saints must also have time to rest. Share one another's work and look after the rest that is needed. The time the flesh rests, the rest of heart the Lord gives, and the eternal rest to be enjoyed at the last are not things that must erase one another.

When speaking of the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, too, we must not miss the center of salvation. Exodus speaks of the seventh day that follows six days. In Acts 20:7 there is the record of gathering to break bread on *"the first day of the week,"* and 1 Corinthians 16:1–2 exhorts that on *"the first day of the week"* the collection to help the saints be set aside. Reading

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these records, we must not regard the act of observing a day as if it washed away sin.

Colossians 2:16–17 does not let anyone judge the saints regarding food and drink, or a festival or a new moon or sabbaths. A new moon is the first day of the month, and judging means disparaging and criticizing others. It goes on to say that these are *"a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."* The substance we must look to through the shadow is Christ. Our salvation and our rest are in Him.

Therefore, treasure worship and fellowship, but do not try to obtain the remission of sins by the record of having kept dates, or to measure the salvation of others by it. As in Hebrews 10:24–25, we must consider one another, stir up love and good works, and assemble together. In that place we hear and believe the salvation already accomplished, give thanks to the Lord, gain new strength, and serve the gospel again.

We preach the gospel entrusted to us and wait for the final rest

Why has God left us, who have received the remission of sins, on this earth? Because He has entrusted us with the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to other souls as well. We are not people who should live satisfied that we alone have been saved. We preach the salvation we have received to the whole world and serve so that others, too, may receive the remission of sins and become the people of God.

Think of how God created for six days and rested. In that word we also look to the work of the gospel on this earth and the final rest. Just as the Lord worked, we, too, live serving the gospel the Lord has entrusted to us, and when the Lord calls us

we enter the rest He gives. It is not that we buy the kingdom of heaven with our labor. The Lord, who has already saved us, entrusts us with work and at the end of it also has us enjoy eternal rest.

There are times when repeated labor feels tedious and small. But a life of hearing and preaching the word, praying and praising, having fellowship with the saints, and helping other souls to be saved is not in vain. Even if we look over the same document again, prepare the same place, and take on work that does not catch the eye, that labor is used for the gospel. If we look only at our immediate circumstances, we grow weary, but if we look at the purpose the Lord has entrusted to us and the final hope, the reason to bear today's work becomes clear.

The rest of the kingdom of God is not merely a dull state of doing nothing at all. It is enjoying eternal life, joy, and glory together with God. Revelation 21:1–4 shows the new creation, in which God dwells with people, and tears, death, and pain disappear. That glory the Lord has prepared for His people cannot be compared with the present suffering. Be comforted by that hope and bear the work entrusted to you by faith to the end.

The gospel of salvation does not change. Let us believe in the Lord, who bore our sins through the baptism and was judged on the Cross, and serve united with the church that believes the same gospel. Stop the life of boasting of your own strength or striving further to remove sin, and do the work of the Lord within the grace that has already made you a righteous person. The Lord, who gives rest to our hearts today, leads us to eternal rest at the last as well.

Exodus 31:18 records that when God had finished speaking He gave Moses the two tablets of the Testimony, written with His own finger. The word of the tabernacle and of the Sabbath

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is placed within the word of the covenant. But in the story that follows, the failure of the people is also revealed. In the last chapter we will look at the glory of God that filled the tabernacle, after passing through the event of the golden calf, the intercession, and the restoration. We will go on reading how God, who entrusts work and gives rest, is together with His weak people.

Questions for Reflection

1. How does believing in both the bearing of sin through the baptism of Jesus and the judgment of the Cross together give us rest from the labor of trying to wash away sin by our own deeds?

2. When we realize our own wrongs after being saved, what does it mean to keep the rest of heart by believing in the remission of sins already accomplished? Why is it necessary to keep hearing the gospel in the church?

3. When we think of the purpose for which the Lord has left us on this earth and the rest He will give at the last, how do we come to look at the labor entrusted to us today? How can we also look after the rest of the people who serve together with us? ✉

Chapter 20

The glory of God that fills our midst

Read Together Exodus 25:8–9; 29:43–46; 35:1–36:7 · Matthew 3:13–17 · Ephesians 1:20–23 · Hebrews 9:11–15; 10:19–25 · 1 John 5:6–8

< Exodus 40:34–35 >

"Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle."

< Ephesians 2:19–22 >

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

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The road that had to be passed through until the tabernacle was completed

In the first chapter of this book we asked why God had the tabernacle built. God said that He would dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt. In chapter 2 we looked at the scene in which those people made a covenant at Mount Sinai, and in chapter 3 at the overall shape of the court, the holy place, and the Most Holy Place. In the previous chapter we read the word of the Sabbath given to the people who make the tabernacle. Now in the last chapter we will read the process in which that promise and those commands lead to the completion of the actual tabernacle.

It would be good first to remember the time order of Exodus. Chapters 25–31 are the commands for making and for service that God gave Moses. But the tabernacle is not set up immediately. In chapters 32–34 are recorded the event of the golden calf, the intercession of Moses, and the restoration of the covenant. After that, in chapters 35–39, the people give offerings and make the tabernacle, the furnishings, and the garments. In chapter 40 what has been prepared is set up and arranged, and at last the glory of God fills the tabernacle.

Therefore the completion of the tabernacle cannot be explained only as a story of skillful people successfully building a structure. We must see together how a people who had betrayed God could hear the word again and stand before Him. On the road to the fulfillment of the promise to dwell among us there are the revealing of sin, judgment, supplication seeking the remission of sins, and the mercy of God. When we read this flow, the depth of the glory that came upon the tabernacle is revealed. And we must also remember the fact that after the tabernacle was completed the life of the people

did not end, but a life of worshiping God and walking together with Him continued. The gospel of the remission of sins we have learned in this book must now lead to our faith and our service.

The failure of the people revealed before the golden calf

When Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people demanded that Aaron make them gods to go before them. Aaron received the golden earrings taken from the ears of the people, made the form of a calf, and built an altar before it. The people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, ate and drank, and rose up to play. While God was making the way known through His word, at the foot of the mountain people were looking for the way in a form made by their own hands.

We must also note the fact that Aaron proclaimed a feast to the LORD. Calling on the name of God did not make the worship they had made fit the will of God. God says that this deed is turning aside quickly out of the way He had commanded. In both the tabernacle and the golden calf the gold and the hands of people are used, but the standard that decides what is to be served differs. The tabernacle follows the will God showed, and the golden calf follows the demand of the people.

The scene in which Moses, having come down from the mountain, breaks the tablets of stone reveals before the eyes the covenant relationship that had already collapsed. After that, the destruction of the calf and stern judgment follow. The Bible does not treat this event as a mere small mistake committed by

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anxious people. It makes us face the fact that the people had forsaken God, who saved them.

The heart that serves a golden calf is not unfamiliar to us today either. If we call on God with our mouths but believe in our hearts that money and power will protect us, we have set material things in the place of God. If the purpose of believing in Jesus lies only in becoming rich and improving our circumstances, then even if we sing praises and give offerings, that heart is directed toward a golden calf. The fervor of worship or the size of emotion does not prove true faith. We must examine whom we believe as God and what we rely on as salvation.

Material things can neither have our sins passed on to them nor receive the judgment of those sins in our place. The One who saved us is Jesus Christ, who received baptism from John and bore our sins and received their judgment on the Cross. If we do not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it is easy to keep holding on to the power of the world even while saying that we believe in God. The gold and silver God has given are to be used in serving God, not something with which to replace God.

We, too, before we were saved, were people who lived following our own desires. Therefore we must not stop at saying to the person who does not yet know true salvation that he is serving an idol. We must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, telling what washes away sin and who saves the soul. That is the true help we can give to people who have lost their way before a golden calf.

Moses admitted the sin of the people and sought God's presence with them

When God speaks of the sin of the people, Moses makes supplication for them. He does not defend them as having been fine by nature. He holds on to the fact that God Himself brought them out of Egypt and to the promise He gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Exodus 32:14 records the answer like this.

"So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people."

Seeing that judgment follows afterward, we cannot read this answer as meaning that all responsibility for the sin disappeared.

Moses goes to God again and confesses that the people have committed a great sin. He pleads that if God will not remit the sin of the people, his own name also be erased from God's book. But God speaks of the responsibility of the one who has sinned. This scene shows how deeply Moses held the people in his heart, but it does not say that Moses sacrificed himself and completed the atonement of the people. Intercession is making supplication to God for others, and here it appears as an earnest prayer seeking the remission of sins and God's presence with them.

In chapter 33 the crisis becomes even clearer. God says that He will not go up in the midst of the stiff-necked people, lest He consume them on the way. The people mourn and take off the ornaments with which they adorned their bodies. For the people who had made a form to replace God with the gold God had given them, this word was not light.

Before the word to take off the ornaments, let us examine our hearts as well. Deeper than the question of whether to wear

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jewelry, there is the thought that anything can be bought if only one has money, and the heart that puts its own stubbornness before God. Even if we lay down the gold on our bodies, if we leave the golden calf in our hearts as it is, we cannot walk with God. We must not think that because we have received the remission of sins it is all right to replace God with material things. The way of forsaking God, who saved us, and never turning back is the way of destruction. We must believe in God, who made us live, as God, and join our hearts to His will.

The tabernacle of meeting that Moses pitched outside the camp, where he met God, also appears. This must be read distinguishing its position in the story from the tabernacle of chapter 40, which is made and set up later.

What Moses asked for was not only arriving at the destination. He pleads that if God does not go with them, He not bring them up from there. This is because God's going with them is the mark that sets the people apart. God answers the supplication of Moses. God's being with them is the blessing the people of God enjoy. We, too, when we pray, must ask not only that things go well but also that we may know the will of God and live together with Him.

But we are not people who can obey perfectly. Even while saying that we will live by faith, we reveal the weakness of the flesh. That is why the way of the remission of sins that God has appointed is needed. God, who gave Israel the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle, has given us perfect salvation through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When we lay down the heart that trusted in its own strength and rely on that salvation, even we who are lacking can draw near before God and walk with Him.

In the covenant given again, mercy and holiness are together

When Moses asks Him to show His glory, God says that He will make all His goodness pass before him and proclaim the name of the LORD. He reveals Himself while protecting Moses so that he can bear it. Seeing the glory is not a matter of a person examining or possessing God as he pleases. It is learning who He is within the grace by which God makes Himself known.

In chapter 34 God has new tablets of stone prepared and calls Moses up the mountain again. And He proclaims Himself as merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. Goodness and truth make us think of the love and the faithfulness of God. God says that He forgives iniquity and transgression and sin, but by no means clears the guilty. When we hear the mercy and the holiness of God together, we also come to understand the grace of the remission of sins more deeply.

Moses bows down and worships, and asks Him to go among this people, to remit their sin, and to take them as His inheritance, that is, as the people who belong to God. God makes a covenant and again gives the word the people must keep. The command not to bow down to other gods and not to make idols appears repeatedly. The ordinances concerning rest and the feasts also follow. Restoration is not a state in which it no longer matters even if one sins, but a relationship of belonging to God, who remits sin, and hearing His word again.

Looking at the tablets of stone given again, we learn the fact that the commands of God must be engraved on our hearts, too, which have received the remission of sins. The law reveals our sins. We are not people who become righteous people by

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keeping the law perfectly. We receive the remission of sins by believing in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. Even so, the commands of God have not become meaningless to the person who has received the remission of sins. The word not to have other gods makes clear even now whom we must love and follow.

My being lacking and throwing away the commands of God as not right are different things. When our shortcomings are revealed, we must believe again in the remission of sins by which the Lord washed us with His baptism and blood, and turn our hearts according to the word. But if we say that because sins have been remitted it does not matter if we love money more than God, we are going against grace. We cannot obtain peace while forsaking the God of salvation. The person who believes in the mercy of God also receives His commands into his heart.

Moses comes down with the tablets of stone and tells the word he received. The record that his face shone is also connected with the meeting in which he shared the word with God. What the people needed was not to make a new god by their own thinking but to hear the word of God. Let us, too, not judge the way of faith only by what goes well. Examine before the word whether you are serving God as God, or loving something else more than Him. To believe in the Lord, who remitted our sins, and to follow His will is the life of the restored people.

They made it according to the command and set it up on the appointed day

After the restoration of the covenant, Moses gathers the congregation, tells them the word of the Sabbath, and then receives the offerings for the tabernacle. Willing men and women bring materials, and the people to whom God gave wisdom work. When the materials become sufficient, Moses has them bring no more. More than the people giving much in itself, it was important to accomplish the work God had entrusted. What stopped at this time was the bringing of more offerings, and the work of making the tabernacle continued.

In chapter 39 even the garments of the priests are prepared, and the completed tabernacle and furnishings are brought to Moses. Moses examines all the work, confirms that it has been done as God commanded, and blesses the people. The completion of the making at this time and the raising up of the tabernacle in chapter 40 must be distinguished. Having finished making the furnishings and having set them up and placed them in their appointed positions are two stages that follow one another.

God commands that the tabernacle be set up on the first day of the first month. The date on which it was actually set up is also clearly recorded.

"And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up" (Exodus 40:17).

This date must be understood within the time after the people came out of Egypt. The text does not separately calculate the total number of months the making took.

Moses sets up the tabernacle, brings the ark of the Testimony inside, and hangs up the veil. On the north side of

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the holy place he puts the table, on the south side the lampstand, and before the veil he puts the gold altar. In the court he places the altar of burnt offering and the laver and raises up the hangings of the court all around. The positions we looked at in chapter 3 now appear as a record of execution. In this process the Bible repeats the fact that he did as God had commanded. The completion of the tabernacle was the result of the word received leading to the labor of hands, without the thinking of the people replacing the word.

The person entrusted with the work of God also serves with this faith. He does the work entrusted to him without replacing the word with what seems better to his own thinking. Nor is everything finished when the tabernacle has all been set up. Now the appointed sacrifices must be offered there, and the priests must perform the office entrusted to them. The completed tabernacle is the place where worship and service will be carried out.

The tabernacle filled with glory and the people who follow the cloud

After Moses finishes the work, the cloud covers the tabernacle of meeting and the glory of God fills the tabernacle. Even Moses was not able to enter it. The person who set up the tabernacle did not become its master. This sight shows that God Himself had come, and that a person cannot control His holy presence. The people come to look not at the completed facility but at God, who dwells in their midst.

In Exodus chapter 29 God promised that He would sanctify the tabernacle of meeting by His glory and dwell among Israel. Now in chapter 40 we see the fulfillment of that promise. The

fact that God came among a people who had gone through the event of the golden calf is all the more surprising. That glory cannot be explained as a prize given to people who had no failures. We must remember together the grace by which the holy God dealt with sin and restored the relationship of the covenant.

Even after the completion of the tabernacle, the road of the people continues. When the cloud is taken up they depart, and when it is not taken up they stay. All Israel sees the cloud by day and the fire by night. Exodus does not end with the words that the people found out every road by their own strength. It ends with the sight of God being with them and leading their journey.

Even before the tabernacle was set up, God led them with the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. The completion of the tabernacle does not mean that walking with God began for the first time in history; it is the important moment at which the promise concerning the sanctuary where He would dwell among the people was fulfilled. For us, too, faith does not end after one great moment of emotion. It leads to a life of relying on the word of the Lord both when we must walk and when we must wait.

Think of this walking together within the Church of God today. God does not leave the saved saints alone but has them hear the word together and serve the gospel. Even though each of us is lacking, we bear the work entrusted to us by faith, with our hearts joined to the church. The work of God is not accomplished by one person’s talent or great wealth alone. Because God, who has spoken, is with us, we believe and work. The basis on which the holy God dwells among us who are lacking and works through us is the remission of sins the Lord accomplished.

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We serve God by the grace that has washed away all sins

It is not that God walked with the people of Israel because they never once sinned in the wilderness. God knew their weakness, and through the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle He prepared the way for them to receive the remission of sins and come forward. In the sacrifice in which hands were laid on the head of the sacrificial offering to pass on sins and its blood was offered, He had them learn the way a sinner stands before God. That type of salvation has been revealed before us as the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished.

The baptism Jesus received from John is the baptism by which He had our sins passed on to Him. Jesus bore all the sin of mankind on His own body, shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment of those sins, and rose again from death and became our Savior. If we separate the baptism from the Cross, we miss the connection of how sins were passed on to Jesus and why He was judged. We must not speak only of the blood of Jesus and leave out the baptism by which He bore sin.

In Matthew chapter 3, before receiving baptism from John, Jesus says this.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15).

When we read the laying on of hands of the Old Testament sacrifices together with this word, we can know the meaning of salvation, that He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism. 1 John chapter 5 also speaks of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, and the witness of the Spirit. The word that He came by water and blood makes us believe in the baptism and the Cross of Jesus together. With the baptism He

received from John and the blood of the Cross, He removed all our sins. To believe this truth is to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Hebrews teaches that Christ accomplished eternal atonement with His own blood and cleanses our conscience so that we may serve the living God. Moses made supplication for the sin of the people, but Jesus Christ accomplished salvation by bearing sin and receiving its judgment. We who have believed in Him are righteous people who have received the remission of all sins. The status of a righteous person does not mean that the flesh has come to make no mistakes. It means that because the Lord bore all our sins and was judged, no sin remains in the believing heart. Let us not measure our salvation by feelings that change every day or by a score for conduct.

Building in the heart the sanctuary where God will dwell is also done by this faith. A large church building or many offerings of money do not wash away the sin of the heart. Nor is it that we produce the remission of sins by repeating prayers of repentance, or gradually become sanctified until at last we are clean enough to receive God. We receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has already washed away all our sins. Admitting a wrong and turning from it is different from the thought of achieving atonement anew by my prayer. The basis of salvation lies not in how much I have grieved but in what Jesus accomplished with the baptism and the blood.

The Holy Spirit, too, is not One obtained by human zeal or the merit of prayer. The Spirit, who is holy, comes upon the heart that has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God makes the person whose sins have been washed away His own child and dwells in his heart. Do not try to produce a special state by your own

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strength in order to receive the Holy Spirit, but first know and believe the gospel that Jesus remitted all sins with the baptism and the Cross. The sanctuary of the heart to receive God is built by faith that believes that word.

Now look at the laver again. Exodus 40:30–32 records that Moses, Aaron, and the sons of Aaron washed their hands and feet at the laver and went into the tabernacle of meeting or came near the altar. Even though Aaron and his sons had been established as priests, they needed washing when they performed their office. This is because the person who draws near to God and serves His work must be holy.

This washing tells us an important word for our faith and service today as well. Even after we are saved, the shortcomings of the flesh are revealed and we commit wrongs. At that time, do not deny even the remission of sins the Lord accomplished, looking at your own state. Thinking of the water of the laver, engrave on your heart again the gospel that Jesus had that very sin, too, passed on to Him through His baptism and was judged on the Cross. Washing the heart by hearing the gospel every day does not mean that Jesus is newly baptized or hung on the Cross every day. It is confirming by faith the remission of all sins He has already washed away.

Therefore there is no need to give up the work of the Lord on the grounds that we are lacking. On the contrary, we must not insist that a wrong is right by saying that we have no sin. Before the commands of God, let us admit our wrongs and cast away our stubbornness, and draw near before God relying on the salvation that has completely removed our sins. We serve not in order to establish our own righteousness but with the righteousness the Lord has given. The Lord accomplishes His work through the people who believe in the gospel of the remission of sins in this way.

Built together in the Spirit, we preach the gospel to the whole world

Ephesians 2:19 calls the saints members of the household of God. They are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. Paul explains like this the community that is joined together in Christ and grows into a temple.

"In whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:22).

When we read the preceding context, we can see that the Gentiles who were far off were brought near by the blood of Christ, and that Christ reconciled the Jews and the Gentiles to God through the Cross. People who were strangers to one another came to have access to the Father in one Spirit. The house where God will dwell is not built by the size of a building or the number of a gathering. The people who believe in the salvation of Christ become one family in Him and are built together.

Ephesians 1:20–23 says that Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and the church is His body. The Church of God is the place where the people who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit gather to worship and serve that gospel. The mere fact of attending a church or holding an office does not make one a member of Christ. One must believe with the heart the gospel that all sins have been remitted through the baptism and the blood of Jesus. Doing religious activities while leaving sin in the heart is different from serving God as a righteous person who has received the remission of sins.

Therefore, when discerning a church, we must examine what salvation it preaches. We must not regard as the same

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thing a gathering that teaches that it is all right to believe only in the blood of the Cross, leaving out the baptism by which Jesus had sins passed on to Him, and a church that preaches that all sins have been remitted through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Church of God believes and preaches that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true gospel of the remission of sins. On this clear faith the unity of one body is accomplished.

If we belong to Christ, the Head, we must join our hearts to His will. The leaders of the church and the saints hear the word together, and share the work entrusted to them and serve, in order to preach the gospel. We must lay down the stubbornness of putting only my plans first and wanting to do only what I want. Though the work each person takes on differs, it is precious because it serves the same gospel. Preaching the word, preparing the materials needed, and helping the labor of other members are connected within one purpose. The work we serve does not stop at maintaining a gathering of people but is the work of God, preaching the gospel of the remission of sins to souls.

The members of one body love and care for one another. They do not turn away from the person who has taken on hard work, and to a member who is wavering in wrong faith they show with the word the way to return together. Giving thanks, being reconciled, and sharing one another's burdens are done within the unity of serving the gospel. The exhortation of Hebrews chapter 10 to consider one another and stir up love and good works also leads in this way to the life of the church. Loving does not mean that we can say that every other gospel is also right. Clearly preaching true salvation is the love that makes souls live.

Think of the fullness of Christ that Ephesians speaks of in the work of the church as well. God preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the blessing of salvation to the whole world through the saints who have received the remission of sins. The person who first believed the gospel preaches this truth to another person, and that person in turn believes, receives the Holy Spirit, and preaches the gospel. In this way the sanctuary where God will dwell is built in the hearts of people, and the body of Christ is built together. Here is the reason we cannot stop at keeping the grace we have received among ourselves.

When the tabernacle was completed, a life of offering sacrifices there and performing the entrusted service followed. For us, too, finishing this book, there now remains the task of living by the word we have learned. Preach to neighbors who do not yet know it the salvation we confirmed in the door, the sacrifices, and the washing of the tabernacle. For one soul to believe in the remission of all sins and stand as a righteous person is more precious than gaining the wealth of the world. Let us begin close at hand, but offer our hearts and our labor together with the church so that the gospel of the water and the Spirit may be preached to the whole world.

On the road of spreading the gospel there are difficulties as well. But the One who moves the world is God. Even though we cannot control every circumstance, we can do by faith the work God has entrusted to us. Do not change the word of salvation because the work is slow, nor be discouraged because your own strength is small. God dwells among us who have been saved and works together with us. Let us join our hearts to the will the Lord delights in and give the rest of our lives to the gospel.

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At the end of this book about the tabernacle, we remember again the promise of the beginning. God wanted to dwell among His people, and Jesus Christ removed all our sins with the baptism and the blood of the Cross. We have become righteous people by believing in that salvation, and children of God who have received the Holy Spirit. Now let us cast away the heart that chased after a golden calf and live according to the word within the Church of God. Let us preach the grace of the remission of sins that has come upon us to other souls, and rejoice together in the work the Lord does. We hope that through us, who are being built together as a dwelling place for God, this gospel may be preached to the whole world.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do the heart that makes a golden calf and the word to cast off the ornaments make me look back on my faith today? Why must we engrave the commands of God on our hearts even after receiving the remission of sins?

2. How are the transfer of sin through the baptism of Jesus and the judgment of the Cross connected with the remission of all sins? When the shortcomings of the flesh are revealed, with what faith should we draw near before God and serve, thinking of the washing at the laver?

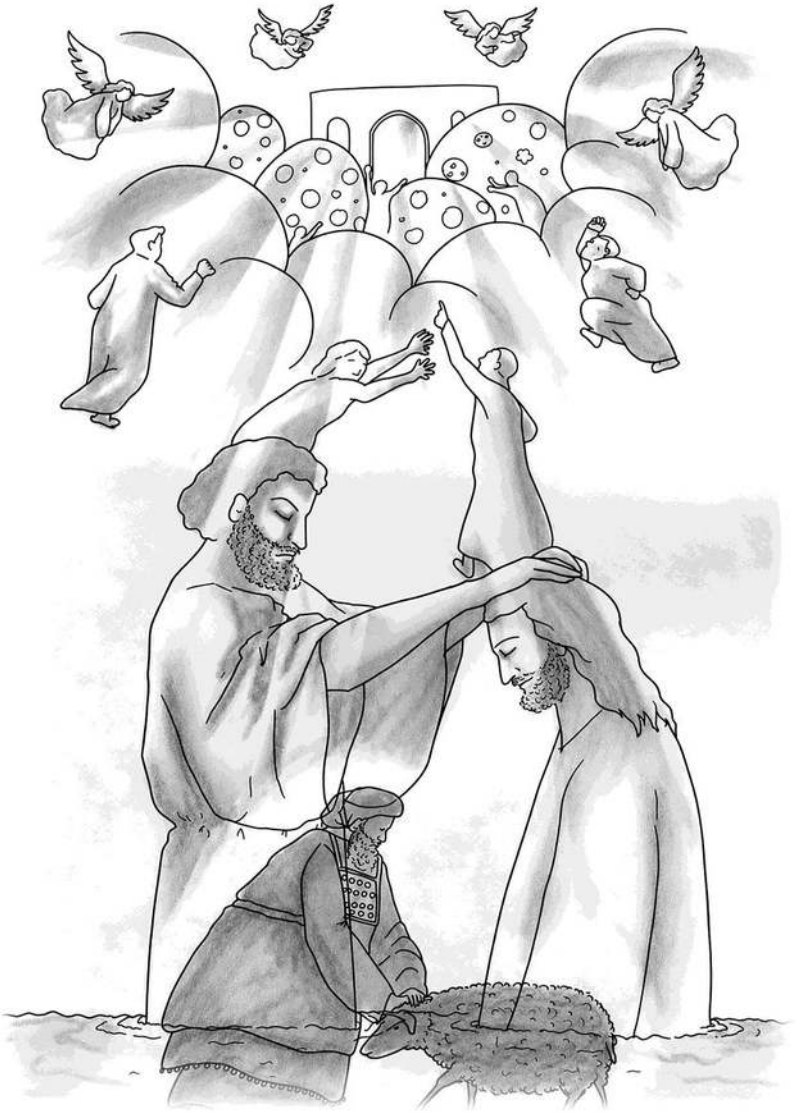
3. What does it mean that the people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are built together as the one body of Christ? What concrete work will I take on in order to preach the gospel and help the members in unity with the church? ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Our faith, which we confirm again before the tabernacle

< Exodus 25:8–9 >

“And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.”

Saying that one has believed in Jesus for a long time and saying that one believes rightly in the salvation Jesus accomplished are not the same. The more familiar a confession has become, the harder it is to ask about it again. Because we have lived attending worship and praying, we assume that our own faith must also be right. But what establishes us before God as people without sin is the faith that knows how the Lord removed our sins and believes that fact with the heart.

With what do you confirm that your own faith is right? Is it the memory of your heart having been warm? Is it the teaching you have heard for a long time? Is it the fact that many people say the same thing as you? If, after you have relied on all those things, sin still remains in your heart as it is, it is time to examine again the content of your faith. That problem is not solved by making your self-assurance stronger.

This is precisely why we read the tabernacle. In the tabernacle is recorded no method that sinners thought up by themselves in order to meet God. What is recorded is what God

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had them make, and how He had sin passed on and the price of sin paid. When we read this word, we can confirm whether the content I have familiarly believed and the salvation God has given are the same. The tabernacle turns our faith back before the word of God.

The One who sets the standard of faith is God

In today's text God, telling Moses to build a sanctuary, Himself shows him the pattern of the tabernacle and of its furnishings. The pattern refers to the shape and the manner in which it must be made. It is not that Moses chose the shape that seemed best to his own thinking. Even the offering the people were to bring, God fixed, saying, *"And this is the offering which you shall take from them" (Exodus 25:3)*. And chapter 25 ends with the word, *"And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain" (Exodus 25:40)*. The tabernacle had to be built following what God had shown.

Why must it be so? Because this tabernacle is the sanctuary God has them build in order to dwell among the people. The person who serves God must first hear the will God has appointed. Making something that satisfies me and demanding that God accept it is getting the order reversed. Here a religion that pleases me and the salvation God has given part ways.

When God said to build *"a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8)*, His intention is deeper than a single tent in the wilderness. The sanctuary in which God wants to dwell is the heart of a person. How could the holy God dwell in a heart that has sin? The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the person who has washed away the sin of his heart

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cleanly by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as the tabernacle had to be built according to the pattern God showed, the heart in which God will dwell also becomes clean by the salvation God has appointed.

This word also raises a clear question for our faith. Are we believing in the salvation God accomplished, or are we holding on to a method of salvation that we ourselves consider right? The person who thinks that if he does his utmost sincerely his sins will disappear makes sincerity his standard. The person who thinks that he must offer more prayers of repentance to become clean examines the quantity of his own prayers. Look at the method of atonement God prepared in the tabernacle. God gave the sacrificial offering that would have sins passed on to it, and the sacrifice in which that offering dies in place of the sinner.

A heart that realizes sin and grieves is necessary. But grief itself is not atonement. Admitting before God that I have done wrong and thinking that I can pay the price of that wrong are different. When we read the tabernacle, we come not to confuse these two. We learn the fact that I am a person who has committed sin, and that a sacrificial offering for me is needed.

When reading the ordinances of the tabernacle, do not look first only for what fits your own thinking. Even when a word appears that differs from what you knew, listen to it. Just as the tabernacle had to be built according to the pattern, my faith, too, must be adjusted to the salvation God has shown. What God has shown cannot be cut down to fit my faith.

Before the death of the sacrificial offering there is the laying on of hands, which passes on sin

When reading the sacrifices of the tabernacle, many people think first of the blood and death of the offering. But in the burnt offering of the herd that God appointed, there is the laying on of hands before the death.

"If his oblation be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish: he shall offer it at the door of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before Jehovah – ASV. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting" (Leviticus 1:3–5).

The person who has brought a bull without blemish puts his hand on the head of that offering. Then he kills that bull, and the priests, Aaron's sons, bring the blood and sprinkle it all around on the altar. Right after the laying on of hands the text says, *"And it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him" (Leviticus 1:4)*. The explanation does not end with the mere fact that the sinner brought an offering. We must see whose sin is passed on to whom, and who dies because of that sin. By the laying on of hands God appointed, the sin of the sinner is passed on to the offering, and the offering that has had the sin passed on to it dies in his place.

This word makes us, who believe the fact that Jesus died on the Cross, ask a question that is absolutely necessary. How did Jesus become the sacrificial offering that bore our sins? If we pass over this question, we cannot clearly know how the death of the Lord and my sins are connected. The laying on of hands

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of the tabernacle makes us see together the passing on of sin and the receiving of the judgment of sin.

Therefore the law of sacrifice of the Old Testament is not a word that stops at an old ceremony. In it God revealed the meaning of salvation, that the sinner lives and the sacrificial offering dies, and promised that one should receive the remission of sins by believing in the Savior who was to come. The reason we read this is to know and believe rightly what work the Savior that sacrifice points to accomplished.

Look at the word of Matthew about why Jesus received baptism from John.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:13–17).

John the Baptist at first tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized by him. But Jesus said to permit it in order to fulfill all righteousness. Here we hear the work the Lord Himself intended to do. Just as the person who brought the burnt offering put his hand on its head, John the Baptist, who represented mankind, baptized Jesus. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His body.

Here is the reason we must read the sacrifices of the tabernacle and the baptism Jesus received from John together.

The meaning of the passing on of sin that God showed beforehand was fulfilled in the work of Jesus. And the Lord, who bore the sins, received the judgment of those sins in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross.

The handling of our sins does not depend on how moved we are as we look at the suffering of the Lord. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had all the sin of the world passed on to Him. Among the sins the Lord bore are my sins and yours, too. The blood of the Cross is the price of life He paid for those sins. Jesus rose again from death and gave us perfect salvation. We receive the remission of all sins by believing in this salvation with our hearts.

Do not leave out one part from the salvation God accomplished

When we read the tabernacle, we become unable to pass lightly over the baptism Jesus received from John. God had the gate of the court of the tabernacle made of a screen *"woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen" (Exodus 27:16)*. The blue thread points to the baptism Jesus received from John, and the scarlet thread to the blood He shed on the Cross. The purple thread signifies that Jesus, who saved us, is God and King, and the fine woven linen makes us see the salvation that fulfilled the word He had promised. God did not have the four threads hung separately but had them woven into one screen. Keeping only what is familiar to me out of these is not believing just as it is the salvation God has shown.

We must not leave out the baptism He received from John on the grounds that we treasure the blood of Jesus. When we believe in the baptism He received from John, we rather come

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to believe clearly that the shedding of that blood was the judgment for all my sins. His having the sins passed on to Him and His receiving the punishment of the sins passed on to Him are one salvation. Their order is also clear. Because Jesus first had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He was able to receive the judgment of that sin on the Cross.

The apostle John also testifies that Jesus Christ came by water and blood.

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV" (1 John 5:6–8).

John says that He came *"not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood."* And he says that these three, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, agree in one. The evidence of salvation lies not in our mood or zeal but in the Spirit, who bears witness of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood. To believe in the salvation God thus bears witness to is faith. Once we know the content that the shadow of the tabernacle and the fulfillment of the New Testament convey, we cannot remain at the vague statement that we like Jesus. We come to confess how the Lord had my sins passed on to Him and how He paid the price of those sins.

As the purple thread shows, the One who accomplished this work is God, who came in the body of a man. We believe both in who the Savior is and in what the Savior did.

Receive what you have heard as the faith of your own heart

Now you must examine your own confession. While saying that you know the fact that Jesus received baptism from John, are you perhaps not believing the very word that my sins were passed on to Him? Can you confess with your own mouth, "When the Lord received baptism from John, my sins were passed on to Him"? The fact of having often heard the same word and believing that word concerning one's own sins are different.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all. Within that sin of the world are not only the few wrongs I remember but all my sins. The person who believes this does not set out again tomorrow to look for the foundation of salvation because of a sin he remembered today. Salvation is received by hearing and believing what the Lord accomplished.

Do not make the confession of having received the remission of sins a pretext for hiding wrongs. Admit wrongs honestly, and believe in the Lord, who has already borne even those sins. The basis on which we have become righteous people lies not in conduct but in the gospel by which Jesus washed away all sins. When this becomes clear, the reason to strive to look righteous by hiding wrongs disappears, and we can admit our weakness before the Savior and receive the guidance of the word.

When reading the tabernacle, do not try to look like a person who knows much of the word. Even if you memorize the names of the colored threads well, what profit is there if you do not believe in your own heart the work of salvation shown in them? If, reading the word, you have come to know

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what was missing from your faith, believe now. The fact that you have long believed differently until now is not a reason to keep holding on to that thinking from now on. The gift of salvation God gives is received by laying down one's concern for appearances.

For us, who already believe this gospel, too, the word of the tabernacle is precious. When we take the work of the Lord lightly because we have heard it often, the tabernacle makes us see again how clearly God promised salvation. What we must hold on to is not a new and surprising story but the truth of the Lord, who actually removed our sins. That truth makes the foundation of faith firm.

Let us believe the salvation the Lord has shown just as it is, and preach it just as we have believed it. To the person suffering because of sin, do not say to pile up more sincerity or emotion, but tell him that Jesus had his sins, too, passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received their judgment on the Cross. Each time you read on through the word of the tabernacle, let this salvation be the standard of your faith and of the words you preach. Faith set right according to the pattern God showed does not boast of itself but confesses Jesus Christ, who completely saved us. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Boldness to draw near to God learned through the tabernacle

< Hebrews 10:19–22 >

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

There are times when we are about to draw near to God but think of our own shortcomings and step back. Even when we try to pray, our past wrongs come to mind first. While we want to hear the word again, it seems that we should stand before God only after becoming somewhat better people. We know that we must rely on the Lord, but to call God Father as we are now feels like a shameless thing.

To such people as we are, today’s text exhorts us to draw near to God. It does not say to come after first correcting ourselves sufficiently. It says that we have obtained boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. To receive this exhortation into our hearts, we must know how that boldness was given. Here the matter divides into whether that boldness

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is mere encouragement telling a person who has sin to take courage, or the actual grace of salvation given by the Savior, who washed away sin.

Here is the reason we read the tabernacle. When we know the tabernacle, we come to know how astonishing a statement it is to speak of entering the Holiest. We learn how a person who could not enter before God in any way he pleased became one who draws near boldly. The word of the tabernacle does not end by setting us far off. It shows what kind of way the way Jesus Christ opened is, and makes us draw near to God relying on Him.

When we know the veil, the grace of the opened way is seen

God had a veil hung between the holy place and the Most Holy Place.

"You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy" (Exodus 26:31–33).

The ark of the Testimony was placed inside the veil, and the veil divided the holy place from the Most Holy Place. Even a person who had come into the tabernacle could not go in and out of every place inside it. In drawing near to God there was a division God had appointed. A sinner could not meet the holy God as he pleased.

But look at what God had this veil woven of. The blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen used for the gate of the court were used just the same for the veil before the Most Holy Place. The very veil that blocked sinners was already showing, embroidered in colored thread, the work of the One who would open that way.

Hebrews explains this division together with the service of the priests.

"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing" (Hebrews 9:6–8).

The priests served in the first part of the tabernacle. But in going into the second part there were three restrictions: the high priest *"alone," "once a year,"* and *"not without blood."* That blood was the blood of the sacrificial offering that had had the sins of the people passed on to it by the laying on of hands and had died. Before this ordinance it becomes clear that human courage cannot solve the problem of sin. The qualification to draw near before God does not come from a heart without fear but from sin having been solved.

So the boldness in the text differs from a person's bold personality. Even a person of few words and many fears can draw near to God if he believes in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. The basis on which we are accepted does not lie in the temperament that differs from person to person, but in the work of the Lord, who washed away sin.

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When we read the tabernacle divided by the veil, this difference is seen. The Holy Spirit indicated that *"the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest" (Hebrews 9:8)* while the first tabernacle was still standing. But today's text says that that way has been opened as *"a new and living way."* If the way that was *"not yet"* made manifest has been opened, we must know who opened that way and with what, with what my sins were washed away, and who received their judgment. When we know that, the statement that we have obtained boldness to enter the Holiest is heard as the news of salvation.

The One who opened the way is the Savior, who made us

Today's text says that that way was opened through the veil, and that the veil is the flesh of Jesus. That way is the way Jesus Christ opened for sinners with His own body. When we read the veil of the tabernacle and look to Christ, we come to know by how costly a sacrifice drawing near to God was accomplished.

When Jesus died on the Cross, the veil of the temple was torn.

"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split" (Matthew 27:50–51).

The veil was torn at the very moment the spirit of Jesus departed. It is not a way opened because sinners became good enough, but a way opened because the Lord gave up His own life in place of sinners. If we think of the way opened by the

sacrifice of Christ as if it were a way we must open by our own efforts, we have not seen what the Lord did.

Who is Jesus, who offered that sacrifice? He is not a creature who, like us, must solve his own sins. He is the Son of God, equal with God the Father, and the Creator, who made us. He, who is God, came in the body of a man and saved us. Our salvation is certain because it is a work God Himself accomplished.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sin of mankind transferred onto His body. Because the One without sin took on sin, He became the sacrificial offering to be judged in our place. And bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross. The death of the Lord does not remain only a tragedy we must grieve over. It is the work of salvation in which He received in our place the judgment of sin that was to come down on us. Jesus rose again from death on the third day and became the living Savior, who saved us.

This is the content of the faith that relies on the blood of Jesus. It is believing that the Son of God, who had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, received the punishment of those sins with His own body. The shedding of the Lord's blood is not a suffering unrelated to our sins, nor can it be separated from the baptism He received from John. The Savior, who is God, took on my sins and yours and paid the price of those sins.

The gate and the veil of the tabernacle showed this work of salvation beforehand. When we read that word together with what Christ accomplished, we come to know that we no longer need to look for the basis for drawing near to God in ourselves. I have no ability to save myself, but the Lord has that ability. I cannot bear the price of my sins, but the Lord paid that price.

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To the person who believes in this Savior, the boldness to draw near to God is given.

Because there is a High Priest, we can draw near today as well

Today's text does not stop at the statement that the way has been opened. It testifies that there is a High Priest over the house of God. The Savior we rely on is alive even now. Because there is One who has taken on the work of salvation for us, we do not stand alone before God holding on only to the strength of our own faith.

There are times when, examining my faith, I forget the One who saved me. While thinking about how strongly I believe and how unshaken I am, I cling to my own state rather than to what the Lord accomplished. On a day when my faith seems weak, I think that the Lord, too, will not be able to accept me. Examining one's own faith is necessary. But what is to be examined is not the strength of one's faith but whether one believes with a true heart in the salvation the Lord accomplished. Faith is relying on the salvation the perfect Savior accomplished.

Hebrews makes clear the result of the sacrifice the Lord offered, like this.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

The high priest had to go in again with blood once a year, but the Lord *"by one offering"* perfected *"forever"* those who have been sanctified. He is not One who makes a sinner clean for a moment and then, seeing his conduct, makes atonement again. For us to receive the remission of sins by believing in

the gospel of the water and the Spirit is to receive this perfect salvation. So do not try to fill in a lacking part of salvation with your own labor.

But the shortcomings of the flesh still appear. We say wrong things and put our own greed first. Even then, do not think that the Lord had only some of our sins passed on to Him. In the sins Jesus had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, the wrong revealed today is also included, and on the Cross He received even its judgment in full.

Therefore, as you become more aware of your wrongs, do not leave the Savior and hide, but believe in that salvation and draw near to God. Do not make excuses for your actions but admit them, and if you have done wrong to a person, turn back. Only, do not think that settling that matter supplements the sacrifice the Son of God offered. Because the salvation of the Lord is perfect, we can become honest before God without hiding our weakness.

Call on the Father with a heart that believes in the washing

Today's text says that our hearts have been sprinkled and our bodies washed with pure water. When we read this word knowing the washing and the sacrifice of the tabernacle, we come to know that the boldness to draw near to God is not a matter of merely steeling one's heart while leaving sin as it is. It is the faith of a person who has received the washing of sin. In the words *"our bodies washed with pure water,"* we see the baptism Jesus received from John. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had our sins passed on to Him, and He shed His blood and received their judgment. By this gospel

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of the water and the Spirit the sin of the heart was washed away cleanly.

Do not miss the order of the word here. It did not say to draw near to God first and accomplish the washing by our own strength. It exhorts us to draw near because we have received the washing. In the tabernacle, too, washing came before entering. The priest had to stand before the laver first, before opening the door of the holy place. The person who knows this order remembers, when he hears the exhortation *"let us draw near,"* the washing the Lord has already given. Instead of waiting blindly until he himself becomes clean, he believes the fact that the Lord has made him clean and draws near to the Father.

The words *"from an evil conscience"* are weighty. Before the word of God, I realize that I am a person who can only go to hell because of sin. A true heart is a heart that admits this fact as it is and accepts the truth of salvation God has given. Full assurance of faith is not the self-confidence of having made my actions perfect without omission, but believing with the heart the salvation the Lord accomplished without omission.

When you pray, are you perhaps hesitating because of conditions you yourself have set? Do you think that you can pray to God only if you have not made a mistake for several days? Do you think that you can ask for the Father's help only if you have first done many things for Him? If you think that way, each time you pray you calculate what you have done. It is trying to get permission from your own conduct instead of the boldness the Lord has given.

You who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, call God Father. The person who has received the remission of sins has the qualification to pray before God. The Lord has given the Holy

Spirit to the one who believes and has made him His own child. Tell Him the things in which you need help, and seek the guidance of the word in the face of problems you cannot solve with your own wisdom. Tell the Father the things you are thankful for as well. Actually enjoying the grace by which the Lord opened the way is the life of drawing near to God.

God, knowing fully what kind of people we are, sent His Son and washed away sin. The person who believes in that love does not regard God as One who pushes him away, but believes in Him as the Father, who washed away sin and brought him near. Because the salvation revealed in the tabernacle was accomplished in Jesus Christ, we have obtained this grace.

When you read from now on the words about the veil, the sacrifices, and the washing of the tabernacle, do not look only for reasons to set yourself far off. Look at what work the Savior to whom those words point accomplished. Jesus, who is God, had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and rose again from death. We have the living High Priest, who opened that way. Relying on Him, let us draw near to the Father today as well with a true heart and full assurance of faith. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The price of sin that cannot be paid with resolutions

< Exodus 24:3–8 >

"So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words which the LORD has said we will do.' And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.'"

There are times when we hear the word of God and resolve that from now on we will live properly. We are ashamed of the days we have lived wrongly, and we want to cut off the same wrongs. That resolution is sincere. But that a resolution is

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sincere and that our sins have been remitted are different matters. Do the sins already committed disappear because we have set our hearts firmly? Can the promise to obey from now on take the place of the judgment of past sins? The scene of establishing the covenant at the foot of Mount Sinai answers this question.

The people of Israel heard the word Moses told them and answered with one voice that they would obey. When Moses read the Book of the Covenant to them, too, they gave the same answer. But the covenant did not end with the answer of the people. Between the two answers an altar was built, offerings were offered, and their blood was sprinkled on the altar and on the people. Together with what the people said they would do, we must see why life had to be sacrificed before them.

The blood of sacrifice placed beside the promise of obedience

Moses told the people all the words and the judgments of the LORD. After receiving the answer of the people, he wrote those words. Then he rose early in the morning, built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and set up twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes. The covenant was not a matter of each person choosing what was convenient for him and promising it. It was a matter of all the people hearing the word God had given and standing under that word.

When the young men offered burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen, Moses put half the blood in basins and sprinkled half on the altar. Then he read the Book of the Covenant, and the people promised obedience again. After that, Moses sprinkled on the people the blood he had kept back, and

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said, *"This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words" (Exodus 24:8)*. The answer that they would obey was a fitting response, but God had blood sprinkled on top of that answer. The resolve of the people and the life of the offering cannot take the place of each other.

What does a covenant established with blood say? In ancient times, when people made an important promise, they killed an animal and established the contract with its blood. It meant that whoever broke the promise would be put to death like that animal. God, too, established His law with blood. The word of God is a word on which life depends. If that word is broken, punishment for sin surely follows. But in the law of God there is not only punishment; there is also the law of sacrifice, which washes away sin. The blood sprinkled on the people showed that the person who cannot keep the word must receive the remission of sins through the sacrificial offering.

Therefore, when sin is revealed, what is needed is not explaining my own intentions at length but acknowledging that the word of God is right. Sin does not become lighter because I thought little of it. If we think little of sin, we come to think little of the sacrifice as well. For the person who accepts the judgment of sin as his own affair, the question of why God prepared the way of sacrifice becomes urgent. The reason we read the ordinances of sacrifice of the tabernacle is also to know how I, who have committed sin, can stand before the holy God.

Saying that we will do well from now on cannot remove the sins already committed

When our wrongs are pointed out, we are apt to put forward our plans for the future first. We say that from now on we will be more careful, live more faithfully, and serve God more zealously. But the sins already committed are not solved by plans we will make from now on. If we try to offer an improved life as the price of the remission of sins, even obedience becomes a means of compensating for our own sins. The person who wants to remove his sins before God must first admit that he is one who can do nothing.

Paul spoke like this about what the law does.

"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19–20).

The intention with which God gave the law is neither to have us take that word lightly, nor to have us keep it and become righteous by ourselves. It is to have us know sin through the law and to lead us to the sacrifice that washes away that sin. The fact of having heard the law and agreed with it is no evidence of not having sinned. We go against the word of God even though we know it, and follow our own greed even while acknowledging the right way. The law reveals this fact without concealment and stops every mouth.

If you are in anguish because of your sins, do not think that you can draw near to God only by putting forward a greater promise. If we make how earnestly I have repented the standard of the remission of sins, then on the day our heart grows cold we come to doubt everything again. The price of

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sin can be paid only with life. That is why God, instead of demanding from the sinner the depth of his contrition, told him to pay the price of sin with the life of the sacrificial offering and receive the remission of sins.

Acknowledging sin is still necessary. Only when we acknowledge sin do we know that the salvation God prepared is necessary for us. But acknowledging and paying the price of sin are different. We can confess sin, but we cannot produce a perfect atonement to take the place of our own life. Together with the word that makes us know sin, God also gave the way for the sinner to live.

The One who took on our sins shed the blood of the covenant

Exodus chapter 24 does not separately record a scene of laying hands on the offering. But this blood of the covenant is connected in one line with the law of sacrifice God would give. The person who failed to keep the word had to lay his hand on the sacrificial offering to pass his sins on to it, kill that offering, and offer its blood to God. This way appears clearly in the ordinance of the burnt offering of the herd.

"If his oblation be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish: he shall offer it at the door of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before Jehovah – ASV. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting" (Leviticus 1:3–5).

The person who has brought the offering puts his hand on the head of the offering without blemish and passes his sins on to it. Then that offering, which has had the sins passed on to it, dies in place of that person. The death of the offering is not a decoration adorning the resolve of the sinner. Because the sins were passed on, the sacrifice for those sins follows. Only when we know the way of salvation this sacrifice teaches can we also believe rightly in the blood of Jesus, who died in place of sinners.

Jesus came to this earth in the body of a man to take on our sins. And He received baptism from John at the Jordan. Listen to the word the Lord spoke to John, who tried to prevent the baptism.

"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).

Just as the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament had sins passed on to it by the laying on of hands, Jesus had all the sin of the world passed on to His body through the baptism He received from John. This includes not only the sin we were born with but also the sin you and I will commit as we live our whole lives. The Lord did not take on only the wrongs we remember and leave the rest for us to pay back ourselves.

So John testified of Jesus like this.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

Jesus went to the Cross because He had had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. The

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Lord received with His own body the punishment that was to come down on us, and shed His blood and died. His having sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and His paying the price of sin on the Cross are the work that accomplishes one salvation. When we believe these two together, we come to know that the death of Jesus is precisely the sacrifice for my sins.

The word the Lord spoke as He gave the cup to His disciples also points to this salvation.

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" (Matthew 26:27–28).

Just as Moses sprinkled *"the blood of the covenant"* on the people at Mount Sinai, the Lord called His own blood *"My blood of the new covenant."* This covenant was not established by our promising to do well from now on. Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and so accomplished the way of the remission of sins. The Lord was buried and rose again from death on the third day. The salvation the living Savior accomplished is a salvation already completed. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all sins, is born again of water and the Spirit, and becomes a child of God.

What we are to present before God is not new merit but faith

Now examine where your heart is leaning. Do you think that because you prayed much today He will accept you, and because you did wrong yesterday He will not? With such thinking you cannot get beyond your own conduct. The evidence of being the people of God lies not in zeal for deeds but in believing the word of God in the heart. Move the object of your faith from your own resolve to the vicarious atonement of the Lord.

The confession of having received the remission of sins is different from the claim of never having done wrong. It is the confession that the Lord had the sins I have committed, and even all the sins that will be revealed in the future, passed on to Him, and that He paid their price in full as well. Therefore we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are righteous people without sin. Our shortcomings do not change easily, but those shortcomings cannot make the atonement the Lord accomplished imperfect.

Then what should we do about the wrongs revealed after we have believed? The two things we saw above, the law and the law of sacrifice, work together here as well. The law shines light on and shows what sins we have committed as we live, and the gospel testifies that Jesus already had those sins, too, passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. When we discover those sins, we do not look for a new offering but hold on by faith to the salvation already accomplished. If we put the law away, we may feel sin less, but no holiness remains. When we discover sin through the law and wash it away by believing the gospel, we live as a holy people before God.

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This faith also removes the reason to hide wrongs. We can lay down the heart that made excuses for fear that salvation would collapse, and honestly admit our wrongs before the Lord, who has washed away all sins, and turn back. The labor of setting wrongs right is not money added to the price of sin already paid. It is fulfilling, as people who have received the remission of sins, the responsibilities we must bear before God and before people.

At the foot of Mount Sinai the people answered that they would obey, and on top of that answer the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled. For us today, too, there is the problem of sin, which cannot be solved by a firmer resolution. God knew that problem and gave His own Son as the Savior. When you discover that your resolve is weak, do not again put forward your own heart as the pledge of salvation. Believe in the Lord, who had your sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received their judgment on the Cross. He, who rose again from death, has completely saved us. We stand before God with thanksgiving by the blood of the covenant the Lord shed. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

A heart that serves only God, who delivered us

< Exodus 20:1–6 >

“And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.’”

When God gave the Ten Commandments, He first said who He is. He said that He is the God who brought Israel out of the house of bondage. And He commanded them to have no other gods. Knowing who the One who saved is and serving Him alone are connected in this way. God Himself taught the person who has received grace whom he must now believe in and follow.

For us, too, who have received the remission of sins, this word is necessary. There are times when we stumble because we are weak. But if we push God out from the center of our

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hearts and bring wealth or our own strength into that place, the first commandment speaks to precisely that heart. After delivering us, God did not leave us to live relying on just anything. He told His people to live honoring God as God.

The One who delivered us from slavery is our Lord

Israel, gathered before Mount Sinai, was not a people who had come to God saying that from now on they would try to do well toward Him in order to get out of Egypt. God had already brought them out. And He told them what kind of people they must live as.

"'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.'" (Exodus 19:4–6).

God did not stop at delivering them from Egypt but brought them *"to Myself."* The purpose of the exodus lay in their becoming a people who belong to God and serve Him. Therefore, when God, who had called them as His own possession, spoke, the people had to hear that word. With the attitude that the One who called is God but the standard by which one will live is to be decided as one pleases, one cannot respond to that calling.

Then who is the LORD, who delivered Israel? He is not a god someone made but the God who exists of Himself. That God, who existed before the world was, is in the New

Testament our Savior, Jesus Christ. We, too, are not people who removed sin by our own strength and became children of God. We received the remission of sins by believing in the salvation Jesus bestowed. The One who made us, saved us from sin, and leads us even now by His word is our Lord.

When circumstances become hard, people sometimes change the god they serve. But the Lord, who delivered us, is not One we can replace, whatever hardship there may be. The commandment to serve God alone is not a word telling us to bring in a strange new master, but a word telling us to know rightly the One who delivered us and to trust Him. Because the Lord is our God, we fear Him, and because the Lord loved us, we treasure His word.

The mouth can call on God while the heart follows something else

God said to have no other gods, and not to make an image and bow down to it or serve it. The One who made us and the things we have made and possess cannot be placed in the same position. And God called Himself *"a jealous God."* It is a living being that is jealous. Even though He is not visible to the eye, God is alive and sees where the hearts of His people are going.

When we hear the word idol, we are apt to think first of an image made of stone or metal. But if we are more conscious of something else than of God, and receive something else into our hearts more than God, that is precisely having another god. The thought that we must have material things to live changes before we know it into the belief that if only we have material things, everything is solved, and going beyond using our own

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ability, we come to trust only in our own strength. Whatever it is, once we begin to regard it as more precious than God, it acts as master in the heart.

Jesus said this to the heart that tries to serve wealth and God together.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

The fact of having wealth and the matter of serving wealth as master are different. The life of earning money and providing what is needed is our part. The problem lies in the heart being dragged along as wealth directs and putting off the will of God. If we rely on the world, on people with much money, or on our circumstances, we come to ruin in the end. Together with what name you call on with your mouth, examine whom your heart is relying on.

This commandment is a word that shines first on my own heart rather than on the faith of others. Stop once in a while and examine whether there is anything you have put before God. Do you acknowledge that the will of the Lord is right even when no one is watching? Do you try to hear His word even when it collides with your own interests? If a person leaves the place of serving the work of God, in the end he comes to serve something in heaven, on earth, or in the water. That is why God examines the hearts of His people by His word.

The grace that washed away sin does not erase the commandments of God

Here some people may be confused. They ask: having said that we are not saved by the deeds of the law, you tell us again to keep the commandments, so in the end is salvation maintained only if we live well? The basis of the remission of sins and the word that the saved person must follow must be distinguished. To the person who has not been born again, the law makes sin known, and to the person who has received the remission of sins, it teaches how to live in this world. Jesus, who saved us, Himself said this.

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus did not do away with the word of God and take our side. So that we might live, who according to the word had to be judged, He received the judgment of that sin in our place. We who had to serve God alone loved something else more, and we who had to believe in the Lord boasted of our own strength. To remove that sin, Jesus, who is God, came in the body of a man and received baptism from John. Through the baptism He received from John, the Lord had all our sins passed on to His body.

And on the Cross He received the punishment of that sin. The Lord shed His blood and died because the judgment of God is not an empty word. The Lord was buried and rose again from death on the third day. The person who believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a child of God. This status was not obtained by one's own

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loyalty but received by believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Think of the ark of the Testimony of the tabernacle. God had the Testimony, engraved with the commandments, put inside the ark, and had its top covered with the mercy seat. He said, *"You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you" (Exodus 25:21)*. The law of God remains as it is, and above it is the atonement for the sinner who must die before that law. How could a person who believes this gospel take the first commandment lightly? The more I know the judgment the Lord received to wash away my sin, the greater the love of the Lord, who saved me from such sin, appears. Hearing the word becomes not an obligation for buying salvation but a response of thanksgiving offered to the Lord, who saved me.

Even when admitting wrongs, rely on the completed salvation

We still have weakness. While saying that we believe in God, we look at the circumstances before our eyes as greater, and while saying that we serve the Lord, we put our own thinking first. When such a heart is revealed as you hear the word, do not hide it. Admit first that according to the law of God you are a person who can only go to hell, and admit that in you, too, there was a heart that relied on wealth more than on God. The attitude of not calling a wrong a wrong clouds fellowship with the Lord.

At that time there is a fact we must not forget. The sin we have realized now, too, is within the sins Jesus already had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John.

The Lord knew in full even the sins I would realize belatedly, had them passed on to Him, and received their judgment on the Cross. Therefore the person who has realized his wrong does not look for a new offering, but comes before God holding on to Jesus Christ, as if drawing near before the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony. It is admitting one's own wrong while believing in the salvation already accomplished. Then the grace that washed away sin refreshes our hearts.

That we are righteous does not mean that the thoughts and deeds of the flesh are perfect. It means that all sins have been remitted by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore neither throw away salvation looking at your own weakness, nor defend your weakness with the words that you have received salvation. When the commandment of God reveals your wrong, acknowledge that the commandment is right, and when the gospel testifies that it has washed away all your sin, believe that that salvation, too, is true. When we receive into our hearts these two roles of the word, we can draw near to the Lord without being caught in excuses and self-reproach.

God teaches us, who have received the remission of sins, by the word within the church. Our hearts often drift toward the world, but when we are together in the place of worship and of the word that God has appointed, we return to God again. The remission of sins received once and for all is perfect, and we still have much to learn. Therefore, when you hear an exhortation, examine your heart in the light of the word. The person who goes on learning from the Lord gives thanks that the Lord has led him rightly, more than that he has kept his own thinking to the end.

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Let us serve the gospel we have received with a heart that belongs to God

To the people called at Mount Sinai, God said that they would become His own possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. The heart of a person who belongs to God cannot stay only within his own interests. Because he knows how precious the salvation that saved him from sin is, he wants to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit also to the person who does not yet know that salvation. This service is not a price for being accepted by God, but sharing together, as a person who already belongs to God, the grace He has bestowed.

The same wealth is used differently according to what one serves as master. It can become what captures the heart and makes one forget God, or it can become what is used for people to receive the remission of sins. The same is true of the time and strength the Lord has given. Turn the heart that tried to pile up everything only for its own safety and boasting, and use that time and strength in serving so that souls may hear the gospel. What we offer must be used for the work of many people receiving the remission of sins rather than for exalting a person's name.

That is why we hear the word together and serve together within the church that believes the same gospel. Alone we easily fall, but when we are together we can hold one another up. Do not try to exalt your own righteousness, seeing one another's shortcomings, but rely on the salvation the Lord has bestowed on us all. Let us seek the will of God together, use what we have received for the gospel, and keep the word in our hearts so that the values of the world may not rule our hearts.

God said that He would visit the iniquity of those who serve other gods *"to the third and fourth generations,"* but that He

would show mercy *"to thousands"* of those who love Him and keep His commandments. The wrath of God is for a moment, and His grace is forever. God gave the commandments not to bind us but to bless us. The One who delivered you from sin is neither wealth nor your own strength. It is Jesus Christ, who had all sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross. The Lord, who rose again from death, is our God even now. If you have accepted something else as master in your heart, admit that it is wrong, and turn to God, believing the gospel that has already washed away all sins. Let us love, honor, and fear God, who delivered us from the house of bondage, and live by the faith that relies on Him alone and serves Him alone. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Christ, who qualified us to draw near to God

< Exodus 26:31–35 >

"You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy. You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy. You shall set the table outside the veil, and the lampstand across from the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south; and you shall put the table on the north side."

Between the holy place and the Most Holy Place there was a veil. Imagine standing before that veil. Could you go in just because you know where God is and can explain what is inside? Knowing the tabernacle and drawing near to God are different matters. Inside the veil is the Most Holy Place, that is, the most holy place. Because God is most holy, the person who draws near before Him must also have a most holy faith. What is the faith that makes you and me stand before Him?

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A person is apt to think first of what he has done. He has attended worship for a long time, learned much of the word, and has also labored for others. When such experiences pile up, he regards the qualification to stand before God as having increased accordingly. But the veil did not open at the sight of a person's record. The atonement God appointed was needed. Today, before that division, we look at ourselves and look to Jesus Christ, who opened the way for us.

One's own qualification, which collapses before the holy boundary

God told Moses to divide the holy place from the Most Holy Place with a veil. Inside the veil were the ark of the Testimony and the mercy seat on it, and outside the veil the table was placed on the north side and the lampstand on the south side. And He had cherubim embroidered on the veil with an artistic design. The cherubim show that God is in the most holy place. The way of drawing near to God is not decided by people as they please, but by God, who is there.

The priests went in and out of the holy place every day, but they could not go into the Most Holy Place as they pleased. The faith that draws near to the Most Holy Place was also different from serving in the holy place. Do not turn this division into stages of a career of faith, thinking that if you serve much you go up to the holy place, and if you become more excellent you go up to the Most Holy Place. If you regard it that way, you miss the need for the remission of sins that the tabernacle shows. What is needed before the Most Holy Place is not the record one has piled up but the faith God wants.

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Hebrews explains what that division of entry shows.

"Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing" (Hebrews 9:6–8).

Into the first part the priests went every day and served. Into the second part even the high priest went only with the blood for his own and the people's faults. Neither the name of high priest nor much service could wash away his faults. The matter of standing before God was solved not by the height or lowness of office but by blood.

So there is no reason to feel at ease by comparing ourselves with others. God looks at the sin of the heart more than at outward appearance. When I admit that I myself am a person who has sin I cannot wash away, I know that the atonement God prepared is necessary for me.

Therefore, looking at the boundary of the tabernacle, do not step back thinking only that God is a fearsome being. The mercy seat inside the veil is the place where grace is bestowed, that is, the throne of grace. The person who draws near with the faith God wants, instead of being put to death, meets God and receives grace. God does not take sin lightly, and yet He Himself has also prepared the way of salvation from that sin.

The way opened with the body of the Lord, who bore our sins

If the way of washing away sin does not come from people, where does it come from? It comes from the Savior God sent. In the Old Testament the sinner laid his hand on the sacrificial offering to pass on sins, and that offering shed its blood and died. This was not a formality for comforting the heart of the sinner. The sin had to be passed on, and the judgment for that sin had to be borne.

The veil also shows this salvation. God had all three doors—the gate of the court, the door of the tabernacle, and even the veil before the Most Holy Place—woven of the same four kinds of thread. From the outer court to before the Most Holy Place, at every passage of drawing near to God the same salvation was embroidered. When we believe, in order, in the baptism He received from John, which the blue thread shows, and in the blood of the Cross, which the scarlet thread shows, these two combine and become perfect salvation. The purple thread shows that the One who would accomplish that work is King in essence. Also, the pillars that held up that veil were four. These four pillars show that the Savior would accomplish this salvation by receiving suffering.

When Jesus came to receive baptism from John, John at first tried to prevent it. Then the Lord said this.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15).

Jesus received baptism from John not because He had sin. The sinless Lord received baptism from John in order to take on my sins and yours. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands,

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the Lord had the sin of the world passed on to His body through the baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind. In *"all righteousness,"* which the Lord fulfilled *"thus,"* there is precisely this work.

Afterward John pointed to Jesus and testified.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

The Lamb, who bore the sin of the world, went to the Cross. On the Cross Jesus received in our place the judgment of our sins, which He had had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. At that time the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. It was not human hands that tore it; it was God who tore it. Why was the veil torn? Because Jesus had all sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan and received their judgment. The Lord tore His own body and opened the way of drawing near to God. And He was buried and rose again from death on the third day.

That you and I draw near to God is because of this salvation Christ accomplished. There is no way of paying the price of sin with our own bodies and going in. If we leave out the baptism He received from John and think only of the blood of the Cross, we do not see how my sins were passed on to the Lord, and if we speak only of the baptism and leave out the judgment of the Cross, it becomes blurred how the price of those sins was paid. Know and believe, just as it is, the work of salvation the Lord performed.

An ear familiar with the gospel and a heart that believes the gospel

Knowing the names of the furnishings of the tabernacle and memorizing their positions helps in reading the word. But the names we know do not save us. Even if we can answer that the blue thread points to the baptism He received from John and the scarlet thread to the blood, salvation comes only when we believe with the heart the fact that our own sins were passed on to the Lord. When you hear the word, do not think that you know it, but check whether that word and the faith of your heart are the same. Believing only in the name of Jesus Christ and believing in what He did are different.

That is why the gospel is not a word heard once and finished. As we live through a week, we are hurt and commit sins through the weakness of the flesh. When at that time we hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit again, the heart becomes clean. Do not regard hearing the same gospel repeatedly as tiresome, but regard it as an opportunity to wash the heart with that word.

Yet there are times when we say with our mouths that Jesus had all sins passed on to Him, but when alone we agonize as if sin that had not been washed away remained. We think that this time at least we must agonize much for the sin to disappear. If we believe only in the blood of the Cross, we regard original sin as remitted, yet the sin we commit every day remains in the heart as it is. It is holding on to one's own anguish as the condition of atonement.

Admitting one's own wrongs is necessary. Admit that in the flesh you are still lacking. But the heart that admits wrongs and the power that removes that sin must be distinguished. My contrition or tears cannot become a price of atonement added to

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the baptism the Lord received from John and the blood of the Cross. The One who removed sin is Christ.

Even before we were born into this world, Jesus had already had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and shed His blood and washed those sins away. Even the sins we commit through the weakness of the flesh are included in them. It is not a salvation in which only the sins we have recalled are washed and the sins we have not yet realized remain outside. Believe this fact just as it is concerning the problem of your own sins.

This is the difference between religious familiarity and the faith of salvation. Familiarity speaks of how long I have heard, and faith holds on to what the Lord did for me. The person who has only familiarity loses the basis of salvation as well when his deeds collapse. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit looks to the Savior, who had those sins passed on to Him, even when he discovers his own weakness. As a person who has both imperfect flesh and a perfect faith, he holds on to the fact of the remission of sins without hiding his wrongs.

Let us draw near to God with the boldness the Lord has given

Hebrews makes clear the boldness needed by the person who draws near to God, like this.

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts

sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19–22).

The text says that the veil is the flesh of Jesus. That veil, woven of four kinds of thread and embroidered with cherubim and hung before the Most Holy Place, points to the body of the Lord. With that body the Lord had our sins passed on to Him and received the judgment and opened the way, and the One who opened that way is the High Priest over the house of God. It is not a way that came about by our removing fear or building up self-confidence.

Look also at the words *"our hearts sprinkled."* The person who always sprinkles the word of truth on his heart is not shaken concerning salvation. Even though feelings rise and fall every day, the word sprinkled on the heart testifies just as it is to what the Lord did. So boldness comes not from the self-confidence that I am without blemish but from the gospel received into the heart.

The person who believes in the gospel that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross and rose again from death is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins. God has given the Holy Spirit to that heart and made that person His own child. We, who could not say with the conscience of the flesh that we have no sin, boldly say that we have no sin by believing in the baptism the Lord received from John and His blood.

This faith is needed just the same when we pray. Drawing near before God and asking for grace is like entering the Most Holy Place, so there must be a most holy faith. Only when we have the faith that the Lord has removed our sins with water and blood can we draw near before God, ask for help, and receive help. If we think that we can stand before the Lord only

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on a day when our state has become good enough, we endlessly examine ourselves and miss the time to draw near.

Even though you believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, do you always regard yourself only as a person who cannot draw near to God? Do not take hold again, with your feelings, of the sins the Lord has washed away. Admit your wrongs before the Lord, receive the teaching of the word, and ask for His help. Every day you draw near to the Father, the salvation the Lord accomplished remains as it is.

Seeing the tabernacle at a glance does not stop at knowing where the innermost furnishing was placed. It is seeing me, who could not draw near to the holy God, and seeing together the Savior, who washed away that sin and made me stand before God. Jesus gave the qualification that I could not obtain with my record and zeal. The person who knows this grace does not boast of himself but gives thanks to the Lord, who had the sins passed on to Him and received the judgment in his place.

I hope that the gospel you know will become your own faith. Jesus had all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death and became my Savior. For us who believe this fact, the way to draw near to God is open. By that way, which the Lord opened by tearing His own body, stand before God today as well with a most holy faith. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

God, who saved us, also gives the strength to serve

< Exodus 40:1–8 >

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. You shall put in it the ark of the Testimony, and partition off the ark with the veil. You shall bring in the table and arrange the things that are to be set in order on it; and you shall bring in the lampstand and light its lamps. You shall also set the altar of gold for the incense before the ark of the Testimony, and put up the screen for the door of the tabernacle. Then you shall set the altar of the burnt offering before the door of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting. And you shall set the laver between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, and put water in it. You shall set up the court all around, and hang up the screen at the court gate.'"

When the tabernacle was set up, God did not tell them only to bring the furnishings and put them in place. He told them to set the things in order on the table, to light the lamps on the lampstand, and to put water in the laver. The tabernacle was not a house that only had its shape, to be looked at, but a house in which service was carried out. In that properly assembled place the service God had appointed had to be performed. God had the tabernacle set up on *"the first day of the first month."*

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For Israel in the wilderness, that day was the day on which the life of serving God at last began.

We, too, after receiving the remission of sins, live serving God. But there are times in the course of serving when our strength drains away. It is because we think that we have received only the remission of sins by grace, and that the life of faith after that must be borne entirely by myself alone. When I mobilize everything I know, the will I have, and the things I can do, and then meet my shortcomings, I come to think that I cannot go on. But the fact that my strength has run short does not mean that the grace God will give has run out as well.

When we look at the whole tabernacle, we also see how God has us live after saving us. There is a sacrifice for sin, there is water to wash with, and there are the bread placed before God, the lamps that light the holy place, and the service of burning incense. These were not things people made as they pleased in order to be recognized by God, but things God provided. Not only for obtaining the remission of sins, but also for the service of the person who has received the remission of sins, the grace of God is needed.

In the purpose for which He washed away sin there is the life of serving God

Before the door of the tabernacle the altar of burnt offering was placed. Do not pass over the fact that when one enters the house of serving God, the very first thing there is the altar on which the sacrificial offering is offered. What must be solved before we speak of our labor is sin. Sin does not disappear by doing many works; it is remitted by the sacrifice God has appointed.

In the Old Testament, the person who had sinned laid his hand on the sacrificial offering to pass on his sin, and that offering died in place of the sinner. This sacrifice shows the salvation Jesus would come and accomplish. Jesus came to this earth in the body of a man, and through the baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind, He had all the sin of the world passed on to His body. Bearing those sins, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and on the third day He rose again from death. The Lord washed away our sins without any remainder.

The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and becomes a child of God. The Holy Spirit comes upon that heart. It is not that we obtained this status by serving; because the Lord saved us, we now serve Him. Because He saved us, we believe; because we believe, we preach the gospel; and by faith we praise God. If this order is reversed, service becomes an endless proving of one's own qualification. When we do much we feel at ease, and when we do little we become anxious.

Hebrews says as follows what the sacrifice of Christ accomplished for us.

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

The Lord cleansed our conscience and made us *"serve the living God."* It is neither a word saying that now that we have received the remission of sins nothing matters anymore, nor a word saying that sin is remitted only if we serve. The blood that Jesus shed because of our sins, after He had had them passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, made us clean. We who believe in that salvation serve God.

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Service is not a price paid to obtain salvation but a new life given to the person who has been saved.

But to carry out the work of God, one must be holy. Here is the reason the laver was placed between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. Only after washing their hands and feet with that water did the priests carry out the office God entrusted to them. A person cannot become perfectly holy by himself. So God placed the water for the one who serves to wash with on the way to service. We, too, do not throw away service because we have discovered weakness, but wash away all sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and do the work of the holy God. That God could be with the people of the wilderness even though they had many sins was also because they washed by the law of sacrifice God had given.

Before we serve the Lord, there is what the Lord did for us. When we are tired and count only our own labor, resentment arises. When we look at the Lord, who had our sins passed on to Him and was judged, we know that even having been enabled to serve is grace to begin with. God, who gave us salvation, also gave us the heart to serve the gospel. If thanksgiving has disappeared, before resolving to do more work, hear that grace again.

Ask for the grace of God before your own strength runs out

There are people who think that although they received the remission of sins freely, after that there is nothing more to ask of God. They take it that from now on they must live by managing on their own, and that even when hard things happen

they must endure alone. Outwardly they look strong in responsibility. But if their own strength then runs out, they come to regard it as the grace of God having run out. From the time you are saved, believe in and rely on God. Be a saint who asks, "Lord, please give," not after your strength has entirely run out, but before it runs out.

In the holy place there were the table of showbread, the lampstand, and the altar of incense. God did not leave the person He had delivered from sin alone in an empty house. He had him eat the bread in the holy place, draw near to the altar of incense, and live under the lamplight. If we remember the names of these three furnishings but do not actually live there, what help is the knowledge of their arrangement to the life of faith?

The word, too, is not needed only when we first learn the gospel. Even after receiving the remission of sins, we must hear the word. The heart that was held captive by its own thoughts changes as it hears the word of God. We come to recognize our self-righteousness, which we had not seen until now, and to know anew the grace the Lord has given. We hear the word not because the number of times we attend worship washes away sin, but because God, who has already washed away sin, keeps feeding our hearts.

Let us read Exodus 30:6–8.

"And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. 'Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations.'"

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God did not tell them only the place to put the altar of incense. The altar of incense was placed across from the mercy seat, of which God said, *"Where I will meet with you,"* and the incense was to be burned in the morning when the lamps were tended and in the evening when the lamps were lit, and was to be *"perpetual."* Incense shows prayer. Like the incense that rises without ceasing morning and evening before the place of meeting with God, we, too, ask every day for the grace we need while serving the gospel of the Lord.

Prayer is not something to be brought out last, after trying every method. From the beginning, ask believing that God will help. God pours out grace, and we must have the cup in which to hold that grace. If your heart is weak, ask Him to give faith; if you do not know the word, ask Him to make you understand; and if there is something needed for serving the gospel, ask Him to supply it. Laying down the thought that I can bear everything myself is not giving up faith but relying on the living God.

The person who knows his own shortcomings asks God for grace. Do not think that your faith looks good only if you hide your shortcomings. We can tell God the difficulties of our hearts, and we can also bring our own problems before the church and pray together. Even after giving the remission of sins, the Lord bestows on His people the grace they need and has them serve the Lord.

Do not let our hearts be dragged around only by circumstances. A faith that thinks that if things go a little well it is the blessing of God, and if things go a little badly God has left, is shaken according to material things. Believe as the foundation the fact that God is your God. Even the hardship you are going through now may be something God has allowed in order to bestow grace. Even if no solution is yet visible in

my hands, we can wait while relying on God. The basis and the hope of our serving the Lord lie in His word, which is clearer than the circumstances of the moment.

God has given us people to serve together with

Do not take unity with the church lightly while saying that you ask for the grace of God. God did not merely let us hear the word and then tell us to scatter, each to bear all the work by himself. He placed together the people who believe the same salvation and gave them different gifts. Having us bear together the work I cannot do alone is also the grace of God.

The fact that the lampstand of the tabernacle was made of one piece of pure gold teaches this unity. Let us read Exodus 25:31.

"You shall also make a lampstand of pure gold; the lampstand shall be of hammered work. Its shaft, its branches, its bowls, its ornamental knobs, and flowers shall be of one piece" (Exodus 25:31).

The lampstand has the base and the shaft, the bowls, the ornamental knobs, and the flowers. Their shapes and the functions they take on differ, but they are joined in one piece so as not to be broken apart. And today's text says to bring in that lampstand and *"light its lamps."* Even if the lampstand is entirely gold, without the light of the lamps it cannot give off the glow of gold. The faith of the remission of sins, too, gives light when people who believe the same gospel unite and work. If being apart from one another and displaying one's own name becomes the purpose, the work the Lord has entrusted becomes blurred.

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Not everyone needs to do the same work well. There are those who preach the word, those who serve with material things, and those who serve with various labors within the church. There are also those who serve behind the scenes through prayer. Their shapes and uses differ, but those works are connected by the same intention of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Labor that does not catch the eye is also the work of God.

Some people try to step back on the grounds that they have no great ability. Others try to do it alone on the grounds that the ability they have is great. Both must learn the intention of God, who has us work together within the church. Each of us individually has no ability and has many shortcomings. The person who is lacking is also a necessary member, and the person who does well also needs the other members. With what the Lord has given, bear the work entrusted to you and treasure one another's service.

Unity does not come about by itself just because people are gathered together. We must believe the same gospel and give our hearts for that gospel. If we weigh first whether I am recognized, the labor of others also looks like competition. But when we rejoice that one soul has received the remission of sins, the service of the many people who labored for that work is seen together. Even if I did not do all the work, we can give thanks that the Lord worked through us.

The fact that our labor is not the price of salvation rather makes us treat one another as precious, as the people of God who have received the remission of sins. When someone is exhausted, instead of merely pressuring him by saying that his labor is insufficient, we can hear the word together and ask God for grace. Even when I have strength, I do not boast as if

that strength came from me. For the same Savior made us live, and the same Lord has entrusted us with today's service.

Let us receive grace and carry out today's service

When we look at the whole tabernacle, we come to know the fact that the atonement God prepared leads to the life of serving God. The God who washes away sin and the God who gives the strength to serve are the same God. Jesus saved us through the baptism He received from John, the judgment of the Cross, and His rising again from death. We who believe in that Lord are not strangers standing outside the holy place, but people who live receiving grace inside the house of God.

Are you feeling your own limits today? Do not regard those limits as equal to the power of God. He has given us the word, enabled us to pray, and given us brothers and sisters with whom to serve the Lord together. God wants us to live relying on Him. Instead of holding out alone and closing your heart, tell the Lord your heart, and look after one another within the same gospel.

We do not bear the work ahead with the memory of having already done much. That we have lived the life of faith until now, too, is because God bestowed grace upon grace. Giving thanks for the grace He gave yesterday, receive the grace of the Lord today as well. Believe in your heart the word you have heard, do not hide newly revealed weakness, and ask God for the sake of the service entrusted to you.

Now, looking at the furnishings of the tabernacle, ask yourself. Am I serving while eating the bread God has given? Am I asking the Lord for help? Am I working with the same purpose together with the people He has given us to be together

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with? These are not conditions to be added in order to obtain the remission of sins, but the actual way in which we, who have received the remission of sins, live together with God.

God did not stop His grace with having saved you and me. He bestows grace today as well so that we may preach to other souls the salvation He has given us. Let us lay down the heart that wants to display itself, and serve together with the gifts the Lord has given. Let us each bear the work entrusted to us with the strength received from the Lord, and rejoice together that through all that labor the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached. God, who washed us, feeds us, helps us, and has us do the work of the Lord. ✉

Sermon 7 by Paul C. Jong

The faith we offer to God and the merit we put forward

< Exodus 25:1–9 >

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering. And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate. And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.'"

There are people who, even though they have served God for a long time, when their sins come to mind, first reckon what more they must offer. They think that if they give more money than last time, do the work entrusted to them more zealously, and pray more earnestly, the anxiety of the heart will disappear. After laboring like that they feel at ease for a while, but when their faults are revealed again, everything they have done looks insufficient. Dear fellow believers, what is such a heart relying on? While saying with your mouth that you believe in Jesus,

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are you not looking for the basis for standing before God in your own labor?

In the word we read today there is the command to bring an offering to God. If we read this command only with the thought of what I must offer in order to be accepted by God, we do not see the salvation contained in the materials God appointed. With this offering God had them build *"a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them,"* and there He intended to remit the sins of the people of Israel according to the law of sacrifice and to dwell with them. The tabernacle was the way of the remission of sins that God gave to a people who had sin. That is why today we hear this word to bring an offering as a word telling us to come with faith that believes in the salvation God has appointed.

The offering God delights in comes from a heart that believes in the salvation He has given. If we are holding on to our own deeds as the basis of salvation, even if the material things we give increase, the problem of faith remains as it is. Today let us examine before the word not what is in our hands but what our hearts are relying on.

God appointed the offering He would receive

When God told Moses to receive the offering of the people, He clearly stated its materials. He had them bring gold, silver, and bronze, the appointed threads, skins, and wood, oil, spices, and precious stones. The hearts of the people had to be willing, and the materials they brought had to be what God had spoken. Giving gladly and giving as one thinks fit are different from each other.

If this point is missed, people put their own sincerity before the word of God. They think that because they chose what they regard as precious and put in much labor, God must also accept it. But the One who receives the offering is God, and what He will receive is also decided by God. In the place where He said to bring thread, a person could not bring some other cord that looked good to him. Moses, too, wrote down what God showed him just as it was and told it to the people.

Our faith is the same. What we must first ask is not how long or how fervently I feel I believe, but whether I believe in the salvation God has spoken of. However strongly we are convinced, if the content of that conviction is our own thinking, it is not the faith God has given. On the contrary, even a person who knows his own weakness, if he believes, according to the word, the salvation the Lord accomplished, stands on a clear basis.

The gold used in the tabernacle teaches the faith that accepts the word God has spoken as the true word. It is far from boasting that one's own will is firm. The silver, written after the gold, shows the gift of salvation God has given us, that is, His grace. Faith is hearing how God removed my sins and receiving that gift. The content of faith is not something I make up. The salvation God accomplished and God has spoken of is its content.

Therefore, when you look back on your faith before God, do not first calculate how much more you have given than others. Examine whether you believe the word that the Lord bore all your sins. Here the faith God receives and the merit people put forward part ways. The heart that holds on to merit presents what it has accomplished, and the believing heart confesses what the Lord has done for it.

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Our offering cannot take the place of the judgment of sin

The gold, thread, and skins the people brought became the materials of the tabernacle, and in that tabernacle God gave the law of sacrifice that remits sin. The offering was used in the place that God had appointed for the remission of sins. But what died in place of the sinner and paid the price of sin was not the labor of the person who gave the offering. The bringing of the offering and the solving of the judgment of sin must be distinguished.

In the burnt offering appointed in Leviticus chapter 1, the sinner put his hand on the head of the offering without blemish and passed on his sins, and the offering that had had those sins passed on to it shed its blood and died. The laying on of hands is the passing on of sin, and the death of the offering is the judgment for that sin. On the way by which the sinner draws near to God there were the transfer of sin and the sacrifice that God had appointed, and atonement was not accomplished merely by having brought the offering with care. This law of sacrifice was the promise of God that one should receive the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, who would come as the sacrificial Lamb.

Before this word we cannot take our sins lightly. Even if we say that we are a little better in comparison with others, the sin remains as it is. Greed and lies that are not visible to others are also sins before God. We who did not keep the law perfectly were people who deserved to be judged. The bronze used in the sockets of the pillars of the tabernacle court and in the altar of burnt offering makes us think of the judgment of that sin. Salvation is accomplished when someone receives in our place the judgment we ought to receive.

Then who received that judgment for us? Jesus Christ received it. Instead of having people pile up religious labor to pay the price of sin themselves, God Himself gave the sacrificial offering that would save us. Before we believe this fact, we try to cover our anxiety with service and ask ourselves all our lives whether my labor is enough. But my labor can neither have sins passed on to it nor end the punishment of sin.

Treasuring what you have offered to God and making it the basis of your own salvation are different. Labor offered out of thankfulness for the grace received is precious. But we cannot say that sin has disappeared by putting that labor forward. If my devotion saved me, what reason would there have been for Jesus to bear my sins? The way God has given is the way of receiving the remission of sins by believing in Jesus Christ.

In the faith God receives there is a concrete salvation

Vaguely acknowledging that Jesus is a good person is not enough. We must know how He had my sins and yours passed on to Him. Just as in the tabernacle there were materials God had appointed, in the faith of salvation, too, there is the definite content God accomplished. We cannot leave out that content and put our own feelings in its place.

This is the word from when Jesus came to receive baptism from John.

"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.

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When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:13–17).

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him. Just as the sinner of the Old Testament put his hand on the head of the offering and passed on his sins, John the Baptist baptized Jesus on behalf of mankind. That baptism, which the Lord received from John, calling it the work *"to fulfill all righteousness,"* was not a ceremony unrelated to our sins. It was the event of salvation in which Jesus had my sins and yours passed on to Him.

This is the truth shown in the blue thread, which verse 4 of the text writes first among the threads of the offering. In Exodus these three threads are always written in the order blue, purple, and scarlet. The purple thread shows that the King of kings, who made us, came in the body of a man, and the scarlet thread shows that He received the judgment of our sins on the Cross. Because Jesus first had sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, the shedding of blood on the Cross could become the judgment of our sins. Therefore, if we leave out the blue and speak only of the blood of the Cross, we lose the connection of whose sins, and which sins, the Lord bore when He died. The baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross are the work that accomplishes one salvation, and we, too, believe in the order in which the Lord performed it.

Jesus, hung on the Cross, is not One who died because of His own sins. Because He bore our sins, He shed His blood and

died in our place. The judgment we had to receive, the Lord received. And He was buried and rose again from death on the third day. Jesus is the living Savior, who saved us from sin and death. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

In this salvation are all our sins, beyond the sins you remember. It is not that the Lord took on only some sins and left the rest for us to deal with by offerings of money and service. Even the faults we are ashamed of now are within the sin of the world that was transferred onto the Lord. To believe in salvation is to accept this fact concerning the problem of one's own sins.

If we agree with the statement that the Lord washed away the sins of others but still try to wash away our own sins with our own hands, such a heart is not fully relying on the salvation the Lord accomplished. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had your sins, too, passed on to Him, and received the judgment of those sins, too, on the Cross. God tells us to believe in this salvation. This is the faith we are to offer to God.

The basis of salvation, which does not change even on the day weakness is revealed

Even the person who believes in salvation comes to see his own wrongs. He discovers himself hurting others with words, following greed, and neglecting the work entrusted to him. At that time he cannot make the excuse that there was no wrong. But admitting one's own wrong and denying the remission of sins the Lord accomplished are different. We admit our own

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shortcomings, and at the same time we also acknowledge the work of the Lord, who had even those faults passed on to Him.

The salvation God has given is not a salvation that newly arises and disappears according to our daily score. The word testifies like this of the sacrifice Christ offered.

"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10–14).

Here the sacrifices the priests offered, standing *"daily"* and offering *"repeatedly,"* and the *"one sacrifice for sins forever"* that Christ offered are placed side by side. The heart that tries to soothe its anxiety by offering something more every day stands on the side of those daily sacrifices.

What our hearts must hold on to is the fact that the Lord offered His own body once for all, and with that one offering perfected forever those who believe. The confession of being a righteous person who has received the remission of sins is different from the boast that my conduct is perfect. It is the confession of faith that the Lord has completely removed my sins. If the basis of salvation were my deeds, everything would collapse at a single fault. But because the baptism the Lord received from John and the Cross are the foundation of faith, we can have the assurance of the remission of sins while admitting our own faults.

Therefore, do not offer a larger offering to hide what you have done wrong, or try to cover the problem of your heart by receiving a good evaluation from people. Admit wrongs before

the word and turn from them, but confirm the remission of sins in the salvation the Lord accomplished. Piling up prayers of repentance and adding offerings of money in order to wash away sin again is like trying to do again with our own hands what the Lord accomplished once and for all.

God knows our circumstances fully. Knowing that we have weakness, He nevertheless saved us completely through Jesus Christ. So we have no need to dress ourselves up as excellent in order to draw near before God. We draw near admitting our own faults and believing in the righteousness of the Lord. That faith makes the heart honest, and has even us, who are lacking, serve the Lord.

If you are still looking in your record of devotion for the basis on which your sins have disappeared, stop that calculation today and believe in what Jesus Christ did. God is not One who gives the gift of salvation after you have first accomplished something great. He gave Jesus, who had all your sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. The Lord, who rose again from death, is your Savior.

Let us, too, who already believe this gospel, stand on the same word. Lay down the heart that exalts itself on the day it gave much and doubts even salvation on the day it gave little. The basis for standing before God is constant. The Lord has removed all our sins, and we believe in that salvation. Instead of the merit of our hands, offer to God as an offering the faith like gold that believes in the salvation the Lord has fully accomplished. ✉

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Sermon 8 by Paul C. Jong

The joy of the offering that lets people hear the gospel

< Exodus 35:29 >

“The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the LORD, all the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring material for all kinds of work which the LORD, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.”

< Exodus 36:2–7 >

“Then Moses called Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, everyone whose heart was stirred, to come and do the work. And they received from Moses all the offering which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of making the sanctuary. So they continued bringing to him freewill offerings every morning. Then all the craftsmen who were doing all the work of the sanctuary came, each from the work he was doing, and they spoke to Moses, saying, ‘The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work which the LORD commanded us to do.’ So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, ‘Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary.’ And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much.”

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Offerings kept coming in for the work of making the tabernacle. The people *"continued bringing"* freewill offerings *"every morning,"* and the workers received those offerings and did the work God had commanded. But the people who were working stopped their hands and came to Moses. They did not come because materials were short. What the people had brought was more than the amount needed. Moses had it made known in the camp that no more offerings were to be made, and the people stopped bringing them. They stopped because the giving overflowed.

This scene teaches how giving should be looked at. The offerings were gathered in order to do the work God had commanded. Both the joy of the giver and the responsibility of the receiver were within that purpose. We cannot say that the work of God went well merely because much material was gathered. The purpose of giving is fulfilled when that material is used for the work God commanded.

When we give to God, too, there is something to keep in mind. Rather than how much you have put out, look at what it is used for. If the offering is used in the work of letting people who do not yet know it hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we have received, there is a clear joy in that giving. I hope that through this word today you will engrave that joy on your hearts.

The will of God, which comes before the amount of the offering

The workers who built the tabernacle did not use the materials as they pleased but did the work of the sanctuary that God had commanded. Because what to make and where to use

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it were fixed, they could also examine how much was needed. What the workers said to Moses, too, was that there was more than enough *"for the service of the work which the LORD commanded."* The measure that measured sufficiency was the command of God. Moses told them to stop bringing not because he took the hearts of the people lightly, but because the materials were sufficient for doing the work entrusted to them.

God told them to bring offerings not because He had no materials. Everything on the whole earth is God's. Nevertheless, He received the goods of the people and let them take part in righteous work. The purpose of that work was to build *"a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8)*. The person who receives the offering must remember why it was given. The materials the people gave with joy were used to set up the sanctuary where God would remit the sins of the people and dwell among them.

Today the sanctuary in which God dwells is the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins. Therefore, this is the sanctuary we build today: a person hears the gospel, receives the remission of sins, and God comes to dwell in that person's heart. Preparing a place to hear the word together, preparing the goods needed so that the gospel can be preached, and giving material things for the work of preaching the word all serve this work. Outwardly they are matters of obtaining a place and preparing things, but when we know the purpose, that within them people hear the salvation of God, we come to know the preciousness of that labor.

A person's sins do not disappear merely because there is a building. We receive the remission of sins when we hear through the word and believe the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. Therefore the place and the goods are used for preaching that word. Obtaining a church building, too, is

precious within the purpose of having people come, hear the gospel, and serve the Lord together. If the offering were given for decorating things to look nice, there would be little reason to give with a glad heart, but if it is used for souls to receive the remission of sins, we can give with a thankful heart.

If we forget that purpose, it is easy to have our hearts captured by the size and shape that are shown to others. On the contrary, if we clearly know the purpose, even needs that do not stand out to the eye look precious. Such is the labor of preparing so that the people who will hear the gospel may come comfortably and hear the word, and the labor of supplying what is needed so that the work of preaching the word may continue. Just as the tabernacle needed not only gold and silver but also bronze, God looks at the use rather than the price. Let us think not of whose name what we have given has exalted, but of whom it has let hear the word of salvation.

The salvation I have received reaches others as well

The reason we give material things for the work of preaching the gospel is that we know what this salvation is. What we heard was different from the statement that if we live a little better God will accept us. We heard how Jesus saved us, who could only be judged because of sin. That word solved the problem of sin in our hearts.

In God’s having the tabernacle built there was the intention of remitting the sins of the people and dwelling among them. In the tabernacle the sinner laid his hand on the sacrificial offering God had appointed and passed on his sins, and the offering shed its blood and died because of those sins. Jesus Christ

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accomplished that intention of salvation. Jesus came in a human body, and through the baptism He received from John the Baptist He had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him.

John testified of Jesus like this.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

In the sin of the world that was passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John, our sins, too, are included. The sins we had hidden and the sins revealed to people, all our faults and all our sins, the Lord received. Bearing those sins, Jesus was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died. He received in our place the judgment of sin that we were to receive, and on the third day He rose again from death. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the news of the perfect salvation this Jesus Christ accomplished for us.

By believing this gospel with our hearts we have received the remission of all sins. The person who piled up his own earnest efforts all his life to remove sin has become a righteous person who believes that the Lord has removed sin. God has given the Holy Spirit to us, who have received the remission of sins, and dwells in our hearts, having made them His sanctuary, and has us live as His children. Because we know this grace, we know that the person suffering from the same problem of sin also needs this gospel.

The way for that person to have the sin of his heart solved does not lie in our looking more excellent. He, too, must hear and believe in Jesus Christ, in whom we have believed. The fact must be preached that Jesus had that person's sins, too, passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment for those sins, too, on the Cross. Therefore the purpose of the offering that serves the gospel

does not end with gathering people. What the people gathered hear and what they come to believe is important.

The Lord paid the price of sin, and the material things we give are used for preaching that word of salvation. When we clearly know this relationship, there is no reason to give an offering and boast of our own merit, nor any reason to think little of all service because the offering is small. The One who saves is the Lord, and we are people who take part in the work of preaching the gospel the Lord has given.

Dear fellow believers, think of the time when you yourselves heard the gospel. There were people who believed and preached that salvation before us, and because they first gave material things and time, we heard the word. If we treasure the word of salvation that reached us, we come to treasure also the labor for the person who has not yet heard that word. Could we enjoy the joy of salvation by ourselves alone while being indifferent to the opportunity for others to hear the gospel?

The offering we give today helps that work. How precious it is that a person hears the word and comes to believe that the Lord has removed his sins! The Lord gave us salvation as a gift, freely. When we know that grace by which He loved us without condition, putting out material things gets free from reckoning loss and becomes a response of thanksgiving.

Joy cannot be produced by compulsion

From the beginning God also spoke of the attitude in receiving offerings. Let us read Exodus 25:2.

"Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering."

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The command given to Moses was different from a word to collect unconditionally as much as was brought. God told him to receive the offering of the one who gives willingly with his heart. In chapter 35, too, the men and women whose hearts were willing brought material for the work God had commanded and gave it gladly to the LORD. That heart was in the very center of the giving.

When we exhort people to serve the gospel, too, we follow this word. We make clearly known what work is needed, and share together why that work is needed for preaching the word of salvation. The joy of faith does not arise by making people ashamed or driving them by comparing them with others. Putting out what one begrudges and does not want to put out, while minding what others think, is not willingness but stinginess.

Even in willing giving there is labor. The material things we have are precious things needed for life, and giving them for the gospel involves a choice. But because we know the grace by which the Lord saved me and the gospel that others need, we gladly bear that labor. Unlike giving that picks out only what one does not begrudge, it is giving precious things to a more precious work.

Nor can we keep only cherishing the intention in our hearts forever, saying that we are waiting for joy. A willing heart leads to actually giving and serving. The materials for the tabernacle, too, did not remain as thoughts in the heart; the people brought the goods and the workers received and used them. The joy of giving grows more when we actually try giving by faith that God will supply, and see it used preciously, than when we put calculation first. If you have come to know the need of the gospel, examine and do the work in which you can take part.

Lay down the thought that your heart can be at ease only if you follow the amount of others. God does not tell us to produce what we do not have and compete with others. We can see this intention also in the word of Paul, who exhorted sharing for the saints.

"But now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have. For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality" (2 Corinthians 8:11–14).

What Paul deals with here is the collection to help saints in difficulty. Its setting differs from the gathering of materials for the tabernacle, but the word to do it *"as there was a readiness to desire it"* and *"out of what you have"* points to the same heart as the people in chapter 35 *"whose hearts were willing."* Our service, too, is a willing response to the grace we have received.

Examine what you can do within the circumstances entrusted to you. You can take part with material things, and you can take part with the labor of preparing the place to hear the word. Examine together with the church what is needed for the work of preaching the gospel, and take on the work you can take on. Though the labor of all is not the same, the gospel we want to preach is the same. When I lay down the heart that wants to prove myself to others, I can thankfully bear the service entrusted to me.

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The offering given must serve the need of the gospel to the end

Think again of the report of the workers making the tabernacle. They let Moses know the fact that the materials they had received were sufficient. For gathering more was not their purpose. The people, too, heard the word of Moses and stopped bringing. Even their zeal in giving moved according to the work God had commanded. And the text closes this scene with the words, *"The material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much."* The giving of the people overflowed without lack.

The workers were the people who actually used the materials. Doing the work entrusted to their hands, they knew what was needed, and when it had become sufficient they made that fact known. We, too, share concretely together the needs of the work of serving the gospel. We examine in prayer what is needed for what work, make known that what has been filled has been filled, and use what we have received for that work. Only then can the people who give together also know what labor they are taking part in and gather their hearts.

The person who knows the purpose of the offering rejoices that the work is accomplished. Even if his own name is not revealed and his labor is not greatly praised, he treasures the gospel being preached. If one looks only at how much people recognize my devotion, hurt feelings pile up in service. But what the Lord has done in serving us is far more than our serving the Lord. When we look at whom the Lord has saved and to whom He is now having us preach this news of salvation, the reason for the labor becomes clear.

Also, once the material things have been provided, the work that must be accomplished with them must actually be done.

The materials of the tabernacle did not become the tabernacle while piled up; what God had commanded had to be made by the hands of the workers. We, too, when what is needed for preaching the gospel has been provided, do not remain in the satisfaction that it has now been provided, but continue the labor of preaching the word. Let us gather our hearts so that the material things given and the labor undertaken together accomplish that purpose.

The joy God receives is different from a face forced to smile. It is the joy of a heart that knows the grace of salvation received from the Lord, and knows that what I give is used to make that grace known. Instead of boasting of the amount we have gathered, I hope you will set your hearts on the gospel the Lord has given being preached accurately. When receiving and when using, when giving more and when stopping because the needed amount has been filled, the purpose is the same. It is to serve the work God has entrusted to us.

The Lord has given us, who have received the remission of sins, the opportunity to take part in such labor, and that is the blessing God has given us. Giving thanks to the Lord, who gave salvation freely, let us gladly give to the LORD what our hearts are willing to give, so that those who have not yet heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit that reached us may also hear it. ✉

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Sermon 9 by Paul C. Jong

The remission of sins assured by the witness of God

< Exodus 27:16 >

"For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. It shall have four pillars and four sockets."

< 1 John 5:6–12 >

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Some people do not hesitate in the least to say that they believe in Jesus. But when asked how their sins disappeared,

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they speak of the time when their hearts were warm. Others, even after hearing the word that Jesus had their sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, doubt their salvation on the grounds that there is no emotion in their hearts today. One person makes his own feelings the evidence of salvation, and the other makes the absence of feeling the evidence of not having been saved. They look like opposites, but both are judging what the Lord accomplished by the state of their own hearts.

Dear fellow believers, who is the One who decides whether our sins have been washed away? Does sin disappear if we ourselves acknowledge that we have no sin, and does the salvation of the Lord become imperfect if we cannot acknowledge it ourselves? The One who bore sin is Jesus, and the One who makes that salvation known to us is God. Therefore faith, before examining whether I can speak confidently, hears what God has testified concerning the Son.

The court of the tabernacle was surrounded by hangings of white linen, and there was only one gate for entering it. The One who appointed that that court gate be woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen was also God. The person who made the gate could not choose materials that seemed good to his own thinking and replace the will of God. Before the salvation this gate shows, it is the same. The person who separately makes a Jesus familiar to our hearts and believes in him cannot pass through this gate. When we believe in Jesus Christ, whom God has made known to us through His word, we, too, can be assured of the remission of sins.

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The witness of God, which is greater than our judgment

1 John says that the witness of God is greater than the witness of men. The object of that witness is the Son of God. The word God has given us is the witness that makes known to us who His Son is and what work He accomplished for sinners. The assurance of faith cannot be made up separately, apart from this content.

We are also greatly influenced by what other people say. When we hear that we must surely have been saved since we have attended church for a long time, our hearts are set at ease. On the contrary, when someone points out our shortcomings, we fear as if God, too, had abandoned us. In the heart that feels loved when it is zealous and feels abandoned when its zeal cools, there is no trust toward God. Even while hearing from people that we have good faith, sin can remain in the conscience as it is. Other people's approval of me does not remove sin. When the word of God says that my sin has been removed, my sin is gone.

Nor can we set our own hearts above God. The word of God is different from a word that becomes true only when I am satisfied. 1 John 5:10 says that not believing the witness God has given concerning the Son is making God a liar. Do not put off the fact of salvation God has spoken, because you consider your own feelings important. If, even though God has made the fact known, you say that you will wait until some other evidence arises in your heart, whose judgment are you placing higher?

That said, stubbornly repeating that one has no sin is not faith either. Only when the content God has testified is clear can we, too, believe clearly. Just as He did not hang just any

thread on the gate of the court of the tabernacle, God has also given the content of salvation clearly. That Son is Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood.

The salvation that the water and the blood bear witness to is a work actually accomplished

1 John bears witness of Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, and says that the Spirit, too, bears witness of that fact. The content the Holy Spirit makes us believe and the work Jesus accomplished do not conflict with each other. We cannot speak of the work of the Holy Spirit while setting aside the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. The meaning of the four threads being woven into one screen for the gate of the court of the tabernacle is also revealed in this salvation.

Let us look at the word from when Jesus received baptism from John.

"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).

When the sinless Jesus tried to receive baptism from John, John at first tried to prevent it. But Jesus said that it was fitting to fulfill all righteousness *"thus."* It is a word saying that He would accomplish the right work of saving all people from sin by the most fitting method, the method without which it could not be done. Through the baptism He received from John the

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Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him.

In the Old Testament God had already shown the passing on of sin by the laying on of hands. When we read the ordinance concerning the live goat on the Day of Atonement, we can clearly know that passing on sin is a matter of placing whose sins where.

"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man" (Leviticus 16:21).

Aaron laid both his hands on the head of the goat and put the sins of the people on it. What the ordinance of the live goat shows is the passing on of sin to another object. When we look at the baptism Jesus received from John in the New Testament, we must know this meaning of the passing on of sin together with it. If we leave only the lesson that Jesus received baptism from John in order to show an example of humility, we still do not know how the Lord had my sins passed on to Him. The baptism of Jesus to which the blue thread points, that is, the baptism He received from John, is the event of salvation in which He had our sins transferred onto Him.

The Lord, who took on those sins, shed His blood on the Cross. Jesus is not One who received judgment because of His own transgressions. He died because of our sins, which He had had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. The Lord gave up His body and shed His blood and died, and so received that punishment in our place, and through this shedding of blood, which the scarlet thread shows, new life was given to us who believe. Therefore, in the faith that believes in the Cross of the Lord, there is together the fact that

He took on my sins. Leaving out one side, the baptism He received from John or the Cross, we cannot say that we know all the salvation the Lord performed.

The One who accomplished this work is the King whom the purple thread shows, that is, God, who made us. That 1 John brings up the Spirit as a witness together with the water and the blood also shows that He, who came conceived by the Holy Spirit, is God in essence.

The Lord came in the body of a man in order to save us, who cannot wash away sin by ourselves. Jesus, having passed through the baptism He received from John and the death of the Cross, rose again from death on the third day. Our Savior is the living Lord, who delivered us from sin and death. The word of promise shown in the fine woven linen, too, Christ fulfilled. This salvation, which God spoke and accomplished according to that word, the Holy Spirit bears witness to.

Here is our assurance. Rather than how much you grieved, look at whose sins Jesus bore. Rather than how strongly you resolved, look at who received the punishment of those sins. The salvation accomplished with water and blood is different from a thought that arose in our own feelings. It is a work the Savior, who is God, actually performed for us.

Do not leave your own sins out of the sins God has remitted

Even while hearing the content of salvation, one can think of oneself as a person outside that salvation. One thinks that the sins of others were washed away by the grace of the Lord, but that for oneself there still remains a sin that must be specially solved. But the word of God says that not only my sins but

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your sins as well have been removed. Is your sin alone left out of the sin of the world that was passed on to Jesus? Is there a sin the Lord did not know, a sin too heavy for Him to take on, or a sin you failed to confess and so He did not have passed on to Him?

In the sins Jesus had transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John are included all the sins we commit from birth until death. The sins committed from age one to age ten, the sins committed at twenty and at forty, and the sins to be committed until death are all the sin of the world. The sins already forgotten and the sins discovered in oneself today are within it. The Lord did not take on only some sins and leave the remaining sins to our efforts. On the Cross He received even the judgment for those sins.

Do not confuse the time when we realize sin with the event in which the Lord had sin transferred onto Him. Just because today you have realized your sin more clearly does not mean that Jesus must receive baptism from John again today. Even though I came to know it belatedly, the Lord knew that sin from the beginning. We commit wrongs every day that trouble our conscience. Each time, we admit our own evil, and give thanks, believing in the salvation of the Lord, who took on even that sin and was judged. There is no occasion to put forward our own prayers or tears as a price in order to achieve a new atonement.

The person who believes this word with his heart is a righteous person before God. Even though his deeds are lacking and his flesh is weak, in his heart he becomes a person without sin by faith. He confesses the remission of sins because he believes in Jesus, who took on his sins through the baptism He received from John and received even the punishment of those sins on the Cross. Here is the reason one can give thanks

for salvation while honestly admitting one's own wrongs. So the person who believes in the remission of sins has no need to present himself as a good person in order to look like a saved person.

To believe in the Son of God is something more definite than becoming familiar with His name. It is accepting as one's own salvation the work of salvation that Son did for me. If we know only the fact that Jesus is God and remember only the fact that He died on the Cross, while leaving out His having had my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, we have not fully accepted the salvation of which God has testified. Just as the gate cannot be the gate if even one of its four threads is removed, believe as one salvation the work of the Lord that the gate of the court of the tabernacle shows.

The thanksgiving of the person who believes in the life that is in the Son

1 John says that eternal life is in the Son of God. It does not say that life is kept in our zeal or in a memory of deep emotion. The one who believes in the Son, who came by water and blood, has life. Faith is receiving that life the Lord has given.

Therefore there is nothing to boast of because the joy after being saved is great, nor anything to judge as the Lord having grown distant because feelings are calm. What is obtained by effort can be lost, but if we have received by faith the gift God gave because He loved, that gift does not disappear. Joy and thanksgiving are also precious. Only, unlike people who first produce joy and present it as evidence of salvation, we rejoice and give thanks because we believe in the salvation the Lord

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accomplished. When the heart to give thanks has dried up, rather than forcibly stirring up your feelings, hear again the word of what He did for you.

That we could come inside the court of the tabernacle is because God gave the gift of salvation to us, who deserved to receive the judgment of sin. To prepare that gift, the Son of God took on our sins and gave up His life. This gift, received freely, is by no means a light thing. The very fact that we paid no price tells us how great the grace we have received from the Lord is.

Do not hang your assurance on your own character or on today's feelings. Believe the word that the Son of God had all your sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death and became the Savior. To the person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. That person has become a child of God who has received the remission of sins.

We have nothing to put forward before God asking Him to recognize us. But the reason to believe in the Son God has testified of and to give thanks is clear. The salvation revealed in the gate of the court of the tabernacle the Lord has already accomplished, and in that Son there is life. We who believe in the Son of God are each a person who has *"the witness in himself."* The person who has received that witness into his heart holds on to the life that is in the Son and is assured of the remission of sins even on the days when feelings rise and fall. ✉

Sermon 10 by Paul C. Jong

One who clearly proclaims the door of salvation

< Exodus 38:18–19 >

"The screen for the gate of the court was woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and of fine woven linen. The length was twenty cubits, and the height along its width was five cubits, corresponding to the hangings of the court. And there were four pillars with their four sockets of bronze; their hooks were silver, and the overlay of their capitals and their bands was silver."

< John 1:29–34 >

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.' And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.'"

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Seeing Jesus coming toward him, John pointed Him out to the people. John the Baptist did not first speak of how many people he had baptized or how hard a task he had borne. He testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. For the One the people most needed was right before them. The One whom a person who has sin must meet is the Savior, who bore that sin.

The most important place in the tabernacle is the gate. If we know the secret of this gate, woven of four threads, we can know everything about Jesus Christ. God made this gate so that anyone could recognize it even from afar and enter easily. So we, too, who know the gate of the court, must engrave the testimony of John on our hearts. If we leave out even one of the four threads in explaining it, the secret of the gate is hidden, and even if we speak of all four threads, if we do not preach the Savior to whom those threads point, the listener goes back without having met Jesus. What is important is not that we have said much about the gate, but whether we have clearly preached the Savior to whom that gate points.

Exodus chapter 38 records that the screen for the gate of the court was made of the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen that God had appointed. The materials God commanded were used in the actual gate just as they were. We, who preach the salvation of which that gate testifies, also have a responsibility entrusted to us. It is to preach the content of the salvation the Lord accomplished just as we received it. If we pick out and preach only the parts we can speak of comfortably, the listener does not see the whole gate.

The One the witness must point to is the Lamb, who bears and carries away sin

When we look at John 1:29–34, the testimony of John is concentrated on making clear who Jesus is. John says that Jesus is One who existed before him. He testifies that he saw the Spirit remaining upon Him, and proclaims that He is the Son of God. That Son is precisely the Lamb, who bears and carries away the sin of the world. The status of the exalted One and the work of bearing sin are together within the testimony of John.

Our believing in Jesus, whom the purple thread shows, is the same as this. Jesus is God, who made heaven and earth, and our Master. He, who is God in essence, did not assert Himself but, upholding the will of the Father, came to sinners in the body of a man. He, the King, did not merely pity sinners from afar but became the sacrificial offering to bear sin. Here is the reason we cannot leave out His having taken on our sins while preaching the exaltedness of Jesus.

John was not merely a witness who watched this matter from the side. God set up the one man John as the representative of mankind, and through the baptism John the Baptist administered, He passed all our sins on to Jesus. John the Baptist says, "*That He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.*" And John did not decide on a savior by his own thinking and put him forward. According to the word the One who sent him had made known, he recognized Jesus and testified.

We who preach the gospel also know the Lord through the word and testify through the word. We cannot demand that the listener go through the same thing on the grounds that our own experience was special. Making someone assured of salvation

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by leaning on the feeling of having heard a voice during prayer is also different from the testimony of the word. What all people must believe in is the Son God sent and the salvation of that Son.

When you preach the gospel to someone, what does that person hear? Does he hear only that Jesus is an excellent person? Does he gain only the expectation that his life will improve if he comes to church? To the person who seeks the remission of sins, make known Jesus, who took on his sins. To the person who is afraid because of his own sins, preach the Savior, who received the judgment of those sins in his place. This is what we are to learn from the testimony of John.

Because He took on sin through the baptism He received from John, the sacrifice of the Cross is our salvation

John's testifying of Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world is different from attaching an empty name. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands, in the New Testament Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind. The One who bore that sin went to the Cross. The baptism He received from John, which the blue thread shows, and the shedding of blood, which the scarlet thread shows, are connected in this way.

If we speak of the suffering the Lord endured on the Cross but do not make known the reason for that suffering, the listener may feel pity for Jesus and shed tears, but he does not know how Jesus had that person's sins passed on to Him.

However much we think of the pain of the Cross, sin does not disappear through that. Because Jesus took on our sins through the baptism He received from John, He was judged in our place. When we preach together His taking on sin and His paying the price of sin, the person comes to know that the death of the Cross is the sacrifice for his sins.

After dying for us, the Lord was buried and rose again from death on the third day. The Savior, who bore the punishment of sin and overcame death, gives us life. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart has all his sins washed away, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a child of God. Jesus, who became the door of salvation, is even now the living Lord of those who believe.

To lead a person before the door of salvation is to make known this work of the Lord in connection with that person's sins. Do not leave the words "the sin of the world" as a passing expression. When Jesus received baptism from John, He had that person's sins of the past, sins of today, and even the sins he will commit in the future passed on to Him. Do not speak as if the sins the listener has not yet confessed, or the sins he himself does not even know, remained outside the salvation of the Lord. Preach the Savior, who bore all sins.

We obtain salvation by believing, not by doing something well. The basis on which sins are remitted, too, lies not in how quickly the listener nodded or in how persuasively we who preach spoke. The basis is that Jesus bore sin through the baptism He received from John and received the punishment of that sin on the Cross. We are people who make known the salvation already accomplished. Therefore, rather than putting our strength into making the listener acknowledge our eloquence, let us open up the word and explain it so that he may clearly know what the Lord accomplished.

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If we leave only familiar words, the news of salvation changes

If, in making the gate of the court of the tabernacle, they had left out the blue thread and used only the remaining threads, they would not have made the gate God commanded. Can the missing blue thread be replaced because the purple thread looks beautiful and the scarlet thread was used in great quantity? People could not reduce the materials God appointed as they pleased. Likewise, leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John, we cannot say that we have fully preached the salvation of the Lord.

Familiar words arise like this. If we read the blue only as the color of the sky and explain it merely as pointing to Jesus being God, who came from heaven, the baptism Jesus received from John, of which the blue thread speaks, disappears.

The Cross of Jesus may be familiar to people, having been heard of often. On the other hand, the word that He had the sin of the world transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John may be followed by questions. So, for fear that the explanation will become long, or that the other person will find it unfamiliar, it is easy to put that part off. But if we leave out the baptism He received from John at the very time when we must make known how He took on sin, we have left behind the content of salvation that person needed to know. Because this truth is so precious, we teach it in clearer and easier words.

Also, while urging someone to obtain the remission of sins, one can wrap up with the words that from now on it is enough to pray zealously and live a good life. Admitting wrongs and living rightly are necessary, but they cannot take the place of the atonement Jesus made. If, after preaching that the Lord

took on all sins through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross, we say that the remaining sins must be washed away by each person through prayers of repentance, we are afterward changing the salvation we preached before. In the end the listener comes to think that he must fill in the remaining portion himself rather than believe in the salvation the Lord has fully accomplished, and the longer he believes, the more sins to repent of simply pile up.

What the fine woven linen shows is the word God promised and fulfilled just as it was. The Lord removed our sins concretely and in detail. The gospel is the news that we believe and preach just as it is, because God prophesied it and the Lord fulfilled it. Here is the reason we cannot add human thinking to make it pleasant to hear. When we hear it often and preach it often, it is easy to forget its preciousness. Even when preaching together the baptism He received from John and the Cross feels like repeating the same story, think of whom that content makes live.

Do not regard it as a fact already known to others on the grounds that it is familiar to us. Even a person who says he has believed in Jesus for a long time may not know why He received baptism from John. Listen to what sin that person thinks remains in him, and make known through the word how the Lord bore that sin. What is needed at this time is not a new and surprising topic but the word of true salvation that washes away that person’s sins.

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The witness who has received salvation does not exalt himself

We, too, when we did not know this gospel, were people who strove to solve our own sins by ourselves. The pillars of the court stood on sockets of bronze and had their capitals overlaid with silver. This shows that we, who had to receive judgment, were established by the grace of God. God let us hear the word, and made us believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The remission of sins is a gift, and being able to preach this gospel is also grace. We cannot despise the person who does not yet know, on the grounds that we knew first.

Think again of the testimony of John. When Jesus came to him, John did not hold the attention of the people on himself but pointed to the Lamb of God. Let us, too, as we preach the gospel, not put forward our own sacrifice and labor so as to make the listener cling to us. Our words and attitude must be a help for that person to believe in what Jesus did. The Savior is Jesus Christ, and we are people who testify of Him.

The Lord Himself said what kind of door He is.

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:9–11).

Jesus is the good shepherd, who gives up His own life to give life to the sheep, and He is the door of salvation. Even if we have cared well for a person and taught him for a long time, we cannot become a door for that person. That person, too, obtains salvation through Jesus. He must believe in the salvation the Lord accomplished with the baptism He received

from John and the blood of the Cross. The person who preaches the gospel does not forget this fact to the end.

Therefore, even if the other person does not understand immediately, rather than getting angry because our pride has been hurt, we examine what he does not know and explain the word again. We can read the Bible together and ask and answer what sins the Lord bore. Faith is something intellectual, so it does not arise by forcing it. Answering that one believes while not knowing is also different from faith. Proclaim clearly, but do not regard the matter of pressing the listener hard and making him agree with our conclusion as preaching the gospel.

Nor do we need to close our mouths because of our shortcomings. If we could preach the salvation of Jesus only once our conduct became perfect, who could preach it? The One we preach is not our lacking selves but the Lord, who washed away even all our sins. Admitting and turning from our wrongs, we can boldly preach the gospel that saved us. The power of salvation lies in the work of Jesus, who bore sin and was judged.

Let us give our hearts to the work of preaching the salvation we have received

There are people who, while saying that they believe in Jesus, agonize that their sins remain. There are also people who were deeply moved at first but, after coming to see sin before the law, have grown weary repeating prayers of repentance. There are also people who do not know where to hear the answer. We can preach to such a person the news of salvation of which the gate of the court of the tabernacle testifies. We can let him hear the word that Jesus, who is God, took on sin

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through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. We who knew and believed first have the responsibility of a watchman.

Not everyone serves this work in the same way. There are those who preach the word directly, those who deliver writings that contain the gospel, and those who give their time and labor so that others may hear the word. Each does the work entrusted to him in his own place, but what is important is that the gospel that saved us from sin is preached. It is treasuring the grace we have received and actually serving.

This service is a work the person who has already received the remission of sins does with thanksgiving. Because the Lord saved us first, we believe, and because we believe, we preach that news. When this order is clear, the one who preaches does not boast of his own merit, and does not lay a new burden on the listener either. And each time we preach the gospel, we, too, ruminate again on what the Lord did in saving us and give thanks.

Let the knowledge of the threads used in the gate of the court of the tabernacle become in your mouths the testimony of the gospel that makes sinners live. Examine not how excellent the listener thought you were, but whether that person has come to know Jesus, who took on his sins. Let us preach clearly the Savior, who rose again from death, without omitting the baptism He received from John and without blurring the judgment of the Cross. Just as John pointed to Jesus, who had come toward him, and cried out, *"Behold!"* let us, too, point clearly to Jesus, who became the door of salvation with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. ✉

Sermon 11 by Paul C. Jong

God, who accepts sinners, and the offering without blemish

< Leviticus 1:3–5 >

“If his oblation be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall offer it a male without blemish: he shall offer it at the door of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before Jehovah –ASV. Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting.”

A person who wished to draw near to God stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with a bull without blemish. The offering had to be without blemish. But what about the person who brought that offering? Was that person, too, someone without any sin? God opened a way for the sinful person who had failed to keep the law to offer a sacrificial offering. What the person brought out was the fact that he was a sinner, and what God received was an offering without blemish. That the offering was without blemish and that the person who brought it had sin are placed together before the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

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We must keep this difference in mind. There are people who, reckoning what they must give to God for Him to accept them, look within themselves for a cleanness worth presenting. But before God, who knows even the thoughts others do not know, there is no one who can present his own cleanness.

Today's word is precisely the word spoken to us who are like this. God Himself set the way by which He can accept sinners. If we know what kind of person God accepts and on what basis He accepts him, we can draw near to God without hiding our sins.

The way God set, saying that He would accept us

In the text the word 'accepted' appears. It means that God gladly accepts. The person giving the offering did not stand before the door of the tabernacle of meeting guessing at the heart of God. God first said what offering was to be given and how, and promised that through that sacrifice atonement would be made for him.

Let us read chapter 1, verse 4 again.

"Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."

There was one condition for atonement. He had to put his hand on the head of the offering without fail. God determined to pass on a person's sins to the sacrificial offering by the laying on of hands. God did not tell the person who brought the offering to try boasting of how excellent he was. He had him pass on his sins, and had the offering that had those sins passed on to it die. Since the people who had been about to die because of sin thus came to live, God, too, gladly received that

offering. What is not resolved by a person who has sinned showing his own righteousness is accomplished through the sacrificial offering.

In our thinking, it seems that before drawing near to God we must prepare something worth giving. It seems we must do enough good deeds to offset our shameful deeds, or wait until our hearts become earnest enough. But does a sin already committed disappear because we have done good deeds? Has the judgment of that sin been fully carried out because we have shed tears? Our hearts being in anguish and the price of sin being paid are different things.

This law of sacrifice is the law of salvation God set. If we give in our own way, supposing that God will like it because we have offered our own devotion, it becomes a vain sacrifice. What we must first learn before the altar of burnt offering is this. God is not One who regards sin lightly, but He is also the One who Himself prepared the way to make us, who have sin, live. If we set aside the promise He gave and try to find in ourselves a reason for Him to accept us, we can never arrive at assurance.

What are you now trying to present before God? The years of having believed for a long time? The fact that you have labored more than others? The basis on which God accepts sinners lies in the sacrifice for us rather than in our record. When we believe this fact, our eyes turn from ourselves to the offering God has prepared.

Why did the offering without blemish have to die?

In the text, the person who brought the offering puts his hand on the head of the offering and then kills the bull. The

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priests, the sons of Aaron, bring the blood and sprinkle it all around on the altar. The offering without blemish is instead put to death for the person. This death is related to the sins of the person giving the offering. If it had only received the laying on of hands and had not been put to death, that sacrifice would have been of no use.

To know clearly what the laying on of hands teaches, let us read chapter 16, verse 21.

"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man."

This word is the ordinance of sending the live goat into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement, and its procedure differs from that of the burnt offering of the herd we read today. Even so, what the laying on of hands does is seen clearly here. Aaron confesses the sins of the people and puts those sins on the head of the goat. God clearly shows that sins are passed on to the offering by the laying on of hands. If one does not even pass on his sins to the offering, would God receive it though he gave the offering a hundred times, a thousand times?

Therefore, when we see the death of the burnt offering, we cannot stop at a vague feeling of pity. The judgment I must receive, the offering receives in my place. In the face of the death of the offering, we cannot but confess, "It is because of me that you die." I go back alive, and the offering dies. I live not because sin is no problem at all, but because a sacrifice was offered for me.

The altar of burnt offering thus makes us confess two things together. That I was a person who had to die before God, and that God has saved me in this way. If I think that I am not such

a wicked person, I do not know why a death for me was necessary. Conversely, if I think that my sins are too great and there is no way at all, I turn away from the way God set for sinners. We do not stop at admitting sin, but believe even the word that there is a sacrifice that bears that sin.

Jesus bore my sins

The One to whom this sacrifice points is Jesus Christ. Though it was offered daily, people kept committing sin, and the sacrifices of animals had no end. So God sent His Son to this earth and had that Son bear our sins and save us. Therefore, even when we believe in Jesus, we cannot stop at His being an excellent and good person. We must know how He, who has no sin, became the Savior related to my sins.

The Gospel of Matthew tells of Jesus receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:13–17).

Even when John tried to prevent Him, Jesus did not give up being baptized, and said that thus it was fitting to fulfill all righteousness. The baptism Jesus, who has no sin, received

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from John was not to wash away His own sins. Jesus had our sins transferred onto His body through the baptism He received from John, who represents mankind.

In verse 5 of the text, those entrusted with the sacrifice were *"the priests, Aaron's sons."* John the Baptist, who gave Jesus the baptism of the laying on of hands in the New Testament, was also a descendant of Aaron. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on by putting hands on the head of the sacrificial offering, the Lord had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John.

The Gospel of John tells of the testimony of John in this way.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

If the sin Jesus bore is the sin of the world, my sins, too, are included in it. There is no reason to think that He bore the sins of others but left out my sins. The Lord knew even the sins we are ashamed of and want to hide, and the sins we committed again and again while thinking we could correct them ourselves. He received baptism from John in order to bear those sins. Believing in the baptism Jesus received from John is different from pretending not to know my sins. It is believing, according to the word of God, how Jesus had my sins passed on to Him.

And the Lord went to the Cross bearing those sins. He who had our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John received the judgment of those sins, shed His blood, and died. If we leave out the baptism He received from John and speak only of the Cross, we miss how the Lord bore our sins. Also, if we know only that He had sin transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and do

not think of the judgment of death, we do not fully see the sacrifice He paid for us. His having sins passed on to Him and His receiving the judgment of those sins were accomplished together.

Jesus rose again from death and became our eternal Savior. He is the Lord who bore sin for me, died for me, and rose again. The basis on which God accepts sinners is this perfect salvation of the Son. It is different from the result of our making our hearts fervent and persuading God. Because God the Father gladly received the work the Son accomplished, He also accepts us who believe in that work.

Faith is receiving the completed salvation

There are people who, even after hearing the gospel, think that this salvation applies to others but will fall short for themselves. They say that since their sin is too shameful and they have repeated the same wrongs, surely there is still something left for them to deal with themselves. But can my sins alone be separated out from the sin of the world the Lord bore? Before judging that a sin not washed away even by the sacrifice of the Lord remains in you, listen to how God speaks of that sacrifice.

The Book of Hebrews tells how perfect this salvation is.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

By one offering He has perfected them forever. It is not that the Lord lightened our sins a little and left the rest for us to remove. The saying that He removed the sins up to the time we first believed but the sins after that must be dealt with separately is a saying that makes the salvation of the Lord into

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half a salvation. The Lord knew even all the sins that come to light while we live, had them passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and was judged on the Cross. Therefore the person who believes actually receives the remission of sins and becomes righteous before God.

We who have received the remission of sins can still commit sin in the flesh. Yet that does not mean we can sin deliberately or justify our wrongs. Nor is there any reason to think, each time our shortcomings come to light, that the salvation of Jesus is incomplete. At such times we ruminate again on the gospel of the water and the Spirit and cleanse our hearts by faith, saying, “Lord, I have committed this sin. Even this sin You bore.” In this way, while admitting our wrongs, we do not avoid God but walk with Him.

The Lord has already received baptism from John, has already died on the Cross, and has risen again from death. A long time has passed since that happened, and we now believe in that salvation. Faith is receiving into my heart now the salvation He accomplished then, and it is the laying on of hands of faith by which I thus pass on my sins to the Lord in my heart. It is not that my faith completes the sacrifice of the Lord, but that the completed sacrifice of the Lord becomes the basis of my faith.

Therefore, do not hear the exhortation to believe as yet another heavy task. It is not asking you to strain to conjure up a special emotion, or to try to look like someone full of assurance. It is accepting as right the word that God has washed away all my sins through the Son. The gift God gave is not something to be made over again by my efforts but something to believe and receive.

God gladly accepts us who believe in the Son

Now let us return to the first question. How can I, who have sin, be accepted by the holy God? Am I accepted only after I have removed every blemish from my life? God gave His Son without blemish as the sacrifice for us. Jesus saved us from sin by bearing our sins and being judged. We who believe in that Son stand before God as those who have received the remission of sins.

Dear fellow believers, faith is not completed merely by knowing how lacking you are. If you have come to know even that you are such a sinner before God, you must now go to Jesus Christ. Knowing my sins need not end in despair. When the Lord has sacrificed Himself for me, what reason is there to push away the gift, saying that I am not qualified to receive it? What was given to a person who cannot make himself qualified to receive it is grace.

Let us make clear the reason we draw near to God. The Lord bore my sins through the baptism He received from John and received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross. He who rose again from death is my Savior. I, who believe this fact, am a person of God who has received the remission of sins. Do not hesitate outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting, trying to prepare further grounds for God to accept you. God, who gladly received the offering without blemish, also gladly receives the faith of us who believe in that Son, and establishes us as people who walk with the holy God. ✉

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Sermon 12 by Paul C. Jong

The sacrifice that makes us love the Lord again

< Exodus 27:1–8 >

“You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits wide—the altar shall be square—and its height shall be three cubits. You shall make its horns on its four corners; its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay it with bronze. Also you shall make its pans to receive its ashes, and its shovels and its basins and its forks and its firepans; you shall make all its utensils of bronze. You shall make a grate for it, a network of bronze; and on the network you shall make four bronze rings at its four corners. You shall put it under the rim of the altar beneath, that the network may be midway up the altar. And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. The poles shall be put in the rings, and the poles shall be on the two sides of the altar to bear it. You shall make it hollow with boards; as it was shown you on the mountain, so shall they make it.”

There are times when, though we know the word of salvation, our hearts toward the Lord grow cold. We know the fact that the Lord has washed away all my sins, but as we live, we come to like other things more than the Lord. The evaluations of people sound louder than the word of God, and the satisfaction visible right before our eyes feels more

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precious than the joy of being with the Lord. We have received the remission of sins, yet we cannot come running with joy, and when we examine our own hearts, we hesitate even to stand before God.

At such times we commonly demand a resolution of ourselves. We think that from now on we will be more faithful, not be shaken, and love more fervently than at first. But the fact that I, who made the resolution, am still weak remains as it is. After doing well for a few days, when we discover our shortcomings again, our hearts sometimes sink even further. If I am only reckoning how much I love God, the burden that I must love grows, but my heart does not easily come alive.

What turns us toward the Lord again? The altar of burnt offering shows us the answer. There we come to see our true state, and we come to see the love of the Lord, who sacrificed Himself for us, who are exactly like that. Today, before measuring the size of our own resolution, we want to receive into our hearts how God loved us.

Before the bronze, we cannot hold on to our own boasting

God said to make the altar of acacia wood and overlay it with bronze. The horns at the four corners were also made of one piece with the altar and overlaid with bronze together with it; He had *"all its utensils of bronze"* made, and even the poles for carrying the altar were overlaid with bronze. This altar overlaid with bronze shows that a person who has sin must without fail receive the judgment for that sin. Yet on the altar a sacrifice was offered in place of the person who had sin. The offering to which the sinner had passed on his sins by laying

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his hand on it was put to death before the LORD, and its body was burned on the altar.

When we stand in our hearts before this altar, we cannot keep holding on to the boasting we held on to among people. Saying that we labored more than anyone, or that at least we are not as bad as that person, cannot remove my sins. Though we may look fine to ourselves when compared with people, before the holiness of God all of us are people deserving of judgment. Just as the entire altar, not just one side of it, was overlaid with bronze and all its utensils were made of bronze, to think that if we only touch up some of our shortcomings a little, a righteousness to put forward before God will arise is a delusion that gives us far too generous a score.

Even after being saved, there are times when we forget this fact. When we do something well, we think that God has good reason to love me specially, and when we spoil something, we think that the reason to be loved has vanished. Though outwardly it may sound like humble words, at the center of that thinking my deeds still lie. We are regarding it as though God draws nearer to the extent I do well and draws away to the extent I do poorly.

Dear fellow believers, when the Lord saved us, did we have such righteousness? We were in sin and could not resolve that sin by ourselves. The picture of ourselves we learn at the altar of burnt offering is not something to admit only at that time and pass by. Even if we do some things well and some things poorly, we remember today, too, that when we come before God we are those who deserve to be judged entirely. Only then do we neither become proud because we did well, nor flee from the love of the Lord because our shortcomings were exposed.

If we look for the reason God loved us in me, there is no answer. But if we look at the Lord, who sacrificed Himself for

us, there is an answer. He did not wait until we had prepared the qualification to be loved, but came first to make us, who were to be judged, live.

Love lies in His having first given up His Son

The First Epistle of John tells clearly how the love of God was manifested.

"In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9–10).

God's loving us came first. It is different from a love returned in proportion after seeing our love. God sent His Son and made us live. For us, who could not be with God because of sin, He gave His Son as the propitiation. The love of the Lord did not stop at feeling sorry for the sinner's plight; it is the love He showed by sacrificing Himself to resolve the sin that destroys us.

When our hearts are dry, it is easy for us to say that we cannot know whether God loves me. Being moved is felt for a while and then disappears, but the love of God never changes, for all eternity. The evidence of love lies in God's having given His Son rather than in the temperature of my heart. Jesus bore our sins and actually paid the price of those sins. When we look at that work, we come to know how clear the love of God is even while my heart wavers.

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In the Gospel of Matthew the words Jesus spoke when He was baptized by John are recorded.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15).

Just as before the altar of burnt offering the sinner passed on his sins by laying his hand on the head of the offering, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all through this baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind. Because Jesus loved us, He received baptism from John and bore our sins. Because He had our sins transferred onto His sinless body, the Lord could shed His blood and die on the Cross bearing those sins. The Lord received the judgment of sin that we had to receive. Just as we see at the altar of burnt offering the sacrifice in our place, we see in the baptism Jesus received from John and in the Cross the love that made me live.

Jesus rose again from death and became the eternal Savior, who washed away all our sins. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts have received the remission of sins and become righteous. Because Jesus actually bore our sins and received their judgment, we who believe have the remission of sins. There is no price of atonement we must add to this salvation.

The Book of Romans also testifies of those toward whom the sacrifice of the Lord was directed.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

While we were still sinners, the Lord died for us. Before this word, we come to lay down the thought of making myself worthy of being loved. Jesus knew all the shortcomings of ours that are now being exposed, and saved us. Knowing our

weakness and wickedness, He bore all our sins. That love did not begin after we had become fervent enough toward the Lord. Because the Lord loved us first, we can draw near to Him today as well.

When we believe this love, thanksgiving arises in our hearts. Though I am so lacking, the Lord gave Himself for me. Jesus, who received baptism from John and died on the Cross, is my God. Our hearts come to turn toward the One who sacrificed Himself like this to make me live. Even without forcing our feelings up, from the word we believe, the reason to love the Lord becomes clear.

God, who saved us, calls for our hearts

God does not save us and then say that we may live any way we like. He tells the people He Himself has saved to serve God alone. Let us see that order in Exodus. Let us read chapter 20, verses 2 and 3.

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me."

God first made clear what kind of God He is. He is the God who brought them out of the house of bondage. And He told them to have no other gods. The people who could not make a way out of Egypt by their own strength received the salvation of God. The One who saved them now calls for their hearts and lives.

Yet even we who have received the remission of sins, as we live, may sometimes like people, sometimes possessions, and sometimes our own thoughts more than God. God's having the altar of burnt offering overlaid entirely with bronze was also to

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let us, who are like this, know that we are those who deserve to be judged entirely. Consider who among God, people, and possessions truly benefits us. Did money bear our sins? Was the praise of people judged in my place? Did my ability save me from death? The One who made us live is Jesus Christ.

Taking care of the things necessary for living is what we ought to do. We must work, care for our families, and prepare what is needed. But if we decide whether or not to believe in God according to what we obtain, we must examine where our hearts are held. If we give thanks to the Lord when things go well but doubt even the love of the Lord when they do not go as we wish, we are regarding what we want to obtain right now as greater than the salvation the Lord has given.

It is the same with the recognition of people. When we are recognized, strength to serve God arises, and when no one acknowledges us, a desire to quit everything can arise. What will hold me at that time is, rather than more praise, the love of the Lord, who gave Himself for me, who have no righteousness to boast of. Even if no one acknowledges me, the salvation I received does not disappear. The grace by which the Lord loved me and made me righteous also remains as it is.

Before that grace we can set the direction of our hearts right. It is laying down the condition that we will follow the Lord only if my will is done, and turning back with the faith that the Lord, who saved me, is right. Turning our hearts to the Lord is a saved person of God rightly relying on and following the One who made him live; it is different from an act of trying to obtain again the salvation already received.

Do not hide your shortcomings, but turn back within that love

Believing in the love of the Lord does not mean that we may regard our own wrongs lightly. The heart that says that since I have received love I will live as I want is far from the heart that holds the sacrifice of the Lord precious. Because of our sins Jesus shed His blood and died. Therefore, the more we believe the fact that the Lord loved us, the more honestly we come to admit our own stubbornness and wrongs.

This turning back is not something done by the will with which I strive to love God more. When we know again and believe how God loved me, the heart that had become exalted comes down to its place. As its fruit, our words and conduct also change. If we have treated someone close to us carelessly, we admit that my words and conduct were wrong. If we have shunned the work entrusted to us because of our own mood, we turn that heart back. If we have despised a brother, thinking we are better than others, we throw away that boasting. Such turning back is the act by which we who have received the remission of sins align our hearts with the will of the Lord, who made us live.

We easily go wrong in two directions. Not wanting to expose our sin, we make excuses, or, because our sin was exposed, we give up on ourselves completely. The one who makes excuses tries to keep his own righteousness, and the one who gives up looks only at his own shortcomings. But the person who believes in the sacrifice of the Lord can hear the word of God again while admitting his wrongs. Even if he stumbles and falls flat because of his shortcomings, his relationship with God is not cut off. It is because the Lord, who saved me, is there.

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There are people who, ashamed of themselves for falling every day, cannot come before the Lord, saying that they have no face to show. That is why God has made us see the altar of burnt offering and the sacrifice offered there. When you feel that your heart has grown cold, do not draw away from people of faith or avoid the word. Nor should you wait, saying that you will go before the word after your heart has grown warm. Hear again through the word and believe how the Lord saved you. Rather than reckoning for a long time the fact that my love is small, what is needed is to receive into my heart how great the love of the Lord for me is.

Jesus did not save us because we were perfect. Because He completely saved us, who are lacking, today too, while the flesh is still weak, we rely on that grace and follow the Lord. We can turn back a wrong heart, and do the things fitting to the word, giving our hearts to them, starting from small things. The faith that the Lord first took hold of me is what makes us walk again.

Let us love the Lord today with the love we received first

The First Epistle of John speaks in this way of the reason we can love.

"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

Before the word that tells us to love the Lord, let us not look only at ourselves. We follow the Lord not because our hearts are strong or because we are people who, once we resolve, are not shaken. There is the Lord, who loved us first. There is the One who sacrificed Himself in place of us, who were to be judged, and gave us the remission of sins. Because

God loved us more, we, too, love God more. Because we believe in His love, even we who are lacking can live loving the Lord.

Dear fellow believers, keep in your hearts the sacrifice we saw at the altar of burnt offering. Remember together the fact that we were those who deserved to be judged and the fact that the Lord gave Himself for us, who were exactly like that. Then there is no reason either to exalt ourselves by comparing ourselves with others, or to hide from the Lord because of our shortcomings. My salvation the Lord has accomplished, and that love is more certain than my mood today.

What the Lord desires of us is, more than our sacrifice that tries to earn His love, a heart that believes in the gift of salvation the Lord has given. As people who have already been made alive by that love, let us turn to the Lord the hearts that were bound to the evaluations of people, and follow the word in the place where we insisted only on our own will. Let us gladly serve the Lord, who made us live, and treat the brothers and sisters who believe with us as precious. Let even us who are lacking love most today the Lord, who first loved us when we were those who deserved to be judged entirely before the altar of burnt offering overlaid with bronze. ✉

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Sermon 13 by Paul C. Jong

Assurance that sin is washed away lies in what the Lord has done

< Exodus 30:17–21 >

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations.’”

There are not many people whose hearts are at ease even though they know what they have done wrong. Moreover, when a person who believes in God discovers hatred and falsehood within himself, he becomes ashamed. He told others to live by faith, yet he sees that his own heart changes even in the face of a small loss. At that time we examine our hearts and ask: When will this anguish go away, and what must we do to be assured that we have become clean again?

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Here it is easy to look for the basis of the remission of sins in the wrong place. When our hearts grow light, we think that sin is gone, and when they grow heavy again, we think that sin still remains. Then the assurance that sins are washed changes several times even in a day. When we hear the word, we seem to be saved, but when we go back alone and think of our shortcomings, we regard ourselves as sinners again. It is because we have made the feelings that arise within ourselves more decisive evidence than what the Lord has done.

God provided the priests with water to wash. What enabled the priest to stand before God was the water God had caused to be put in the laver, rather than the cleanness he felt. We, too, learn from this laver where the assurance that sins are washed comes from. Assurance is not obtained by waiting until our hearts reach the state they want. It is knowing how Jesus had our sins passed on to Him and how He ended their judgment, and believing in that salvation with our hearts.

God, who gave water to wash together with the warning of death

In today's text God commands Aaron and his sons to wash their hands and feet. They had to wash when going into the tabernacle of meeting, and they had to wash when coming near the altar to perform their duty. The altar here is the altar of burnt offering. At that altar the priests received and sprinkled the blood of the sacrificial offerings and burned the offerings. While doing that work, unclean things got on their hands and feet. Neither the office of priest, nor the years of long service, nor the circumstance of having much to do could take the place of this washing.

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Let us read verse 20 again.

"When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die."

In this word God warned of death. His having the laver made of bronze also shows the same meaning. In the Bible bronze points to judgment, and it presupposes the fact that if there is sin, there will be judgment without fail. The way to draw near to God, God determines. The priests, too, had to follow that way. We try to cover over the problem of sin with the thought that we are better people than others, but having done something well does not mean that what we did wrong is erased. God is the holy One who judges sin.

But look closely at the command. God did not merely say to wash; He first had the laver made and had water put in it. God, who warned of death, also prepared the way to escape that death. God is just, and so He judges sin, but He is merciful, and so He prepared the way to wash before judging. What the priest needed was to wash with the water God gave rather than to put forward his own circumstances.

How important a word this is for us, who are afraid because of sin! Before the holiness of God we cannot become bold by our deeds. Yet God did not tell us to remove our sins on our own and then come; He Himself did the work of saving sinners. The laver makes us look to the grace of the washing of sins that He prepared. The more a person knows the judgment that the bronze points to, the more precious he holds the water contained in it.

We must believe in the baptism by which He bore our sins

The water contained in the laver shows beforehand that Jesus would wash away our sins through the baptism He received from John. Just as the dirt on the hands and feet is washed with water, we have the sins of our hearts washed away by believing the word of salvation that Jesus had our sins transferred onto Him. It is not that, whatever we believe, it is enough if our hearts become at ease. It is believing that very work God accomplished for us.

At the Jordan River, Jesus received baptism from John, saying, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. The reason Jesus, who has no sin, received baptism from John did not lie in any sin of His own. Just as in the Old Testament the sinner passed on his sins by laying his hand on the head of the sacrificial offering, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind.

Therefore, the faith with which we look at our sins has a clear basis. It is not merely saying that my sins are gone without even knowing where they went. The Lord Himself had those sins passed on to Him. The sins you and I commit from birth until death, the sins committed knowingly and the sins committed unknowingly, are all within the sin of the world that was transferred onto Jesus through the baptism He received from John. Its scope is far wider than the list of sins I have managed to remember.

John the Baptist called Jesus *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*. Jesus did not come to soothe the hearts of sinners for a moment, but came to actually bear sin and receive the judgment of that sin. Because He bore

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all our sins through the baptism He received from John, He shed His blood and died on the Cross. Jesus, who has no sin, paid the price of our sins in our place. And He rose again from death and became the eternal Savior, who saved us.

The laver was placed between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar, that is, on the way that passes the altar of burnt offering and goes into the holy place. This article, a bronze vessel with water in it, shows two things together. The water points to Jesus having had our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, and the bronze to His having received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Because those sins had been passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John, He could receive their judgment on the Cross. Only when we know these two things distinctly yet believe them together can we hold on, even in the face of the wrongs that come to light daily, to the fact that those sins have already been passed on and their judgment has already ended. The Savior who had sins passed on to Him and the Savior who paid the price of those sins are the same Jesus Christ.

Are you not leaving out the wrong that came to light today from the sins that were passed on to the Lord? Are you not thinking that the Lord washed away the sins of others, but this sin remaining in my heart I must resolve myself? Faith before the laver does not reduce, by its own thinking, the scope of the salvation the Lord has already accomplished. Especially when a sin seems shameful to you, do not hide it, but believe in the Lord, who bore even that sin.

The Spirit testifies of the water and the blood of the Lord

When the priest stood before the laver, the water in it was already there. It was because God had said, *"Put water in it" (Exodus 30:18)*. On the days when the priest's heart was heavy and on the days when it was light, the water to wash was in its place. So it is with the baptism Jesus received from John and the judgment He received on the Cross. That work has already been accomplished once and for all, and regardless of the rising and falling of our hearts, it is clearly testified by the word.

The First Epistle of John says, concerning Jesus Christ, who came by water and blood, *"It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth –ASV" (1 John 5:7)*. Therefore, if we leave out the baptism He received from John and look only for a fervent feeling within ourselves, we are turning away from what the Spirit testifies. The Spirit is not One who fabricates by feeling a salvation we do not have, but One who makes us know and believe the true salvation the Lord accomplished. The Holy Spirit dwells in the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Even a person who says that after praying earnestly all night his heart became relieved cannot say, by that relief, by what his sins were removed. What we must examine is the content we believe rather than the relief of our hearts. It is whether we believe the fact that Jesus had all my sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

Repeating to oneself, "I am clean," cannot serve as a basis either, so when the next wrong comes to light, one is shaken again. But the person who knows and believes from the word

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how the Lord washed away sin has a basis to return to even when his shortcomings come to light. Faith is accepting as true what God accomplished and testified of, and relying on that work.

Therefore, do not set aside what the Lord has done on the grounds that your heart is still heavy. Shame makes us look back on the fact that I did wrong, but it cannot judge whether the atonement the Lord accomplished is complete. Do not wait for your feelings to change, but examine what the word says and whether you believe that word with your heart.

With the heart that admitted sin, admit also the salvation of the Lord

Even we who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have a heart that does not want to admit our own wrongs. We sometimes make the excuse that we did so because the other person did wrong first, and sometimes think that since we have labored much for God, this much is all right. Just as unclean things got on the hands of the priest who worked at the altar of burnt offering, we who serve the gospel also become stained with wrongdoing in the place where we serve. Just as the priest could not skip the washing by putting forward his office, we, too, cannot replace the washing of sins with the service we have rendered.

Before God, honestly admit that when you hated, you hated, and that when you lied for your own benefit, you lied. Only, neither the length of the words of admission nor the amount of tears shed can become the price of atonement. Do not try to fill what is lacking in salvation by praying more prayers of repentance. Believe the fact that Jesus already had even that sin

passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received its judgment with the blood of the Cross.

Here there is something we must ask ourselves. Why is it that I admit the fact that I did wrong, yet cannot admit the fact that the Lord has washed away even that wrong? After admitting sin, do not stop at reckoning how much anguish you are in. Look to the Lamb of God, who bore our sins and carried them away. The One who received the judgment of sin is the Lord, and the One who made us righteous is also the Lord.

The person who believes in this way does not boast that his own deeds are perfect. He admits the weakness of the flesh as it is. At the same time, because the Lord saved him from all sin and judgment, he believes that he is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins. My wrong is real, and the salvation of the Lord, who washed away even that wrong, is also real.

The last verse of the text calls this washing *"a statute forever to them—to him and his descendants throughout their generations" (Exodus 30:21)*. It is a statute given not only to the descendants of Aaron but also to us today, who have been called as priests and serve the gospel. Because the atonement of Jesus, to which the sacrifice of the altar of burnt offering points, was accomplished once and for all, there is nothing to offer again, but we go often to the laver and confirm the washing. Just because we have realized today's wrong, we do not ask that the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross be repeated. It is confirming again from the word that the salvation already accomplished contains even that sin that came to light today.

God gave the priests the laver with water in it and commanded them to wash. To us He has given the word of salvation: the baptism Jesus Christ received from John, the

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blood of the Cross, and His rising again from death. Do not wait for your heart to change enough to satisfy you, but believe that word. Our assurance does not come from evaluating ourselves favorably, but from the fact that the Lord, who had all sins passed on to Him and received their judgment, accomplished perfect salvation. Even on the day a wrong comes to light, return to that word and confirm it by faith. Just as the water of the laver washed the hands and feet of the priests, Jesus, who had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, has already washed away even the wrong that came to light today. ✉

Sermon 14 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who first washed the feet of a disciple who would fail

< John 13:1–11 >

"Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.' For

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He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean.'"

Peter did not fully know what awaited him. Even when Jesus washed his feet, he did not know its meaning, and he did not rightly know how firmly he could follow the Lord. But Jesus knew Peter completely. In recording this washing of feet, John first wrote, *"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1)*. It was because of that love to the end that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples.

Let us read verses 36 to 38, later in the same chapter.

"Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, where are You going?' Jesus answered him, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.' Peter said to Him, 'Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.' Jesus answered him, 'Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.'"

At the very moment Peter was declaring confidently that he would lay down his life for the Lord, Jesus knew that he would deny the Lord three times before the rooster crowed.

Yet the account of Jesus washing Peter's feet is recorded before this confident declaration. Before Peter denied the Lord, and before he realized his own weakness and was discouraged, Jesus first taught him the washing he needed. The assurance of the remission of sins is different from the confidence that I will never once fall in the future. It is the assurance of believing in the Savior, who had even the sins of my falling passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John.

We cannot keep ourselves by a confident declaration that we will follow the Lord

There are times when we make a great resolution out of a heart that loves the Lord. We set our hearts that from now on we will not put our own desires first, and that whatever happens we will serve the Lord. But when we actually suffer loss or face criticism from others, we show a side of ourselves that differs from what we had expected. In the midst of difficulty, we do not follow through on what we said when we were at peace.

Such a thing happened to Peter, too. In the courtyard of the high priest, when he was asked, *"You are not also one of His disciples, are you?"* Peter denied it, saying, *"I am not!" (John 18:25).* And when he denied it the third time, the Bible records, *"Immediately a rooster crowed" (John 18:27)*. The person who had said he would lay down his life for the Lord denied his relationship with the Lord before people. Peter's confident declaration could not keep Peter.

Here, too, lies the reason we are surprised at ourselves. We believed we could keep at least this much, yet we collapse time and again. We expected that since we had begun to serve the Lord, the shortcomings of the flesh would almost disappear, but instead we see hatred and rivalry coming out while we work together. Then some, hiding their shortcomings, find that unacknowledged wrongs pile up and their hearts grow dark, and some give up, saying that they are no longer qualified to follow the Lord. In both cases they are looking in their own deeds for the basis on which to keep themselves. If we resolve more firmly and strive, we may fall a little less for a while, but by that we cannot overcome sin.

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Jesus did not have Peter speak a greater resolution, but first washed his feet. He taught him the salvation to rely on when he discovered his own sins later. The priest of the tabernacle passed the altar of burnt offering and washed his hands and feet at the laver. Just as that water was not something the priest had produced, a disciple is not a person who produces within himself the strength to become clean, but a person who relies on the washing the Lord has given.

Dear fellow believers, if we think only of how long our own faithfulness will last, we become afraid. But when we see what the Lord did while knowing my whole life, we have a basis to believe. The Lord is the Savior, who knows all our weakness and came to wash away even the sins we commit through that weakness.

The disciple who accepts the washing the Lord gives

When Jesus came to Peter, Peter was startled, saying, *"Lord, are You washing my feet?" (John 13:6).* He was overwhelmed that the One he believed in and served as Lord had wrapped a towel around His waist and was about to wash his feet. But Peter did not yet know the meaning of that washing. It was a polite refusal that came from a heart that exalted the Lord, but that heart could not stop the washing the Lord intended to give.

Let us read verses 7 and 8 again.

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.'"

Jesus spoke of this washing in terms of the relationship between Peter and Himself. To have no part with Him means becoming a person who has no relationship at all with Him. Neither the fact that Peter had lived with Jesus nor the fact that he had followed the Lord many times could take the place of this washing. The same is true of the word we have heard and the labor we have done for the gospel. Jesus washed the feet of the disciple in order to make him a person who has a part with Him. The person who has a part with Jesus is not a person who puts forward his own record, but a person who believes in the Lord, who washed away his sins, as his Savior.

On hearing this word, Peter asked, *"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9).* It was the zeal of one clinging with his whole heart for fear of coming to have no part with the Lord. Then Jesus said, *"He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean" (John 13:10)*. What mattered was not the amount of washing Peter had decided on, but the work the Lord had already done to make him clean. The bath was already finished, and what remained was washing off the dust that gets on the feet while walking the road.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a person who has already bathed. The wrongs he commits afterward as he lives are like the dust on his feet. Just because he discovers such a wrong, there is no reason to make a way to be saved again from the beginning. He has only to confirm again the word that Jesus had the sins of our whole life passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. The One who determines salvation is not we ourselves but the Lord, who had our sins passed on to Him.

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The Lord bore even the sins that will come to light in the future

Some people say, concerning this text, that the sins before believing were washed, but the sins committed after believing must be washed every day by prayers of repentance. If sins are divided like that, after being saved no one can follow the Lord with peace of mind. What the washing of the laver teaches is not the word to begin a new atonement every day, but the word to confirm again and again by faith the fact that Jesus had all the sins of our whole life transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John.

Jesus, our Creator, came in the body of a man and received baptism from John. Jesus, who has no sin, had the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. This is what the words *"for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)* mean. And by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross bearing that sin, He received the judgment of sin in our place. Jesus, who was buried and rose again from death, is our eternal Savior. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

When He washed the feet of the disciples, Jesus had already received baptism from John, and what remained was to go to the Cross bearing that sin. The sin of Peter's later denying the Lord was not outside that sin of the world either. Jesus knew even that sin Peter would commit in the future and had already had it passed on to Him. As the word *"What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (John 13:7)*

says, only after he fell did Peter come to know why the Lord had washed his feet.

As we live our whole lives, we come to know again, in the face of our shortcomings, how abundant that salvation is. Therefore, there is no reason to be shaken, each time our weakness comes to light, wondering whether Jesus had known me wrongly. The Lord knew us exactly, and knew even the sins we do not yet know. The word *"He loved them to the end" (John 13:1)* speaks of the love that removed to the end even the sins we commit until we die.

The person who believes this fact does not pass over his failures lightly. It is because he knows that on account of those sins Jesus received baptism from John and shed His blood on the Cross. To live life carelessly, using the assurance of the remission of sins as an excuse, is not to know this love. And yet he does not regard the salvation of the Lord as having collapsed because of that failure; to the extent that he admits the fact that his sin is great, he also fully acknowledges the work of the Savior, who ended even the judgment of that sin. The person who knows the love that had even the sin of denying the Lord passed on to Him comes to give thanks to the Lord rather than boast of himself.

Faith is more important than the fact of having been nearby

In the text there is one more word we must remember. Jesus said, *"You are clean, but not all of you" (John 13:10)*. This word did not mean that the washing of the Lord fell short. John records right after, *"For He knew who would betray Him" (John 13:11)*. Verse 2 of the text says that the devil had already

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put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. Judas, too, was sitting together in that place, but he was not a person who believed in Jesus as the Savior.

So this washing is not received automatically because one was in that place, but is received by the faith that believes in the salvation the Lord accomplished. Even if one stayed beside Jesus and had the opportunity to hear His words, if he does not believe in Him as the Savior who washed away that person's sins, he does not obtain the remission of sins. Gathering together in church and hearing the word is precious. Only, whether one believes that word with the heart comes before the fact of being in that place.

Do you believe with your heart the fact that Jesus had all your sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John? When your weakness comes to light in the future, will you rely on Jesus, who had even that passed on to Him? There is no need to foresee everything that has not yet happened. We have only to believe that the Lord, who knows our whole life, had the sin of the world transferred onto Him. The person who knows the fact that I live only if the Lord washes me holds precious the salvation He has given.

As you learn the washing of feet, do not stop at merely admiring the humble act of the Lord. Receive into your hearts why Peter needed that washing, and why we today also need that salvation. The strength to follow the Lord does not come from boasting of how well we can serve Him. It comes from knowing and believing how completely He washed away our sins.

Keep following the Lord as a person who has been washed

Are there times when you want to keep away from the work of the Lord because of your own wrongs? Do you think that others seem to have good faith but you are too lacking to join them? What to rely on at that time is not a self without shortcomings, but the Lord, who first washed the feet of Peter. If we look at ourselves, we cannot follow a single step, but if we look at the Lord, we can follow again. The Lord does not leave a disciple to give up, bound by his shortcomings, but has given the word by which to live relying on the salvation of the Lord.

Before God, admit your own wrongs as they are. Only, after admitting them, do not linger in endlessly condemning yourself. There is no sin in the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins, but when unacknowledged wrongs pile up, there are times when the heart grows dark. At that time, when we confirm again that Jesus had even that sin transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross, the heart grows bright. Because He rose again from death, we follow the living Savior. The faith that I am righteous without sin does not mean that the score of my deeds is high, but is the confession that the work of the Lord, who washed me, is complete.

The assurance of the washing the Lord gives raises us up. It makes us draw near to God with a clean heart, hear the word together with those who believe in the Lord with us, and serve the work of the gospel entrusted to us. It is neither that we should abandon all our work because our shortcomings came to light, nor that we should repay those sins by working much.

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Because the Lord has already washed away our sins, we can serve again with thanksgiving.

Listen to the exhortation given to us.

"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 'For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul" (Hebrews 10:35–39).

We are not people who draw back and live weighed down by our own sins. We are people who have received the faith that leads to the saving of the soul. Because the salvation the Lord has given is complete, we hold on to confidence. Instead of looking at yourself and becoming discouraged, set your heart on the work the Lord has entrusted to you. Hear the word of the remission of sins, be united in the same faith, and preach the salvation of the Lord to those who do not yet know this gospel. While we preach that word, we ourselves also live relying on the grace of the Lord.

Peter declared confidently that he could keep himself to the end, but Jesus loved him to the end and washed him. When the risen Jesus asked him three times at the Sea of Tiberias, Peter answered, *"Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You" (John 21:17)*. Unlike his earlier confident declaration, it was a confession made because he had come to know his own weakness and the Lord, who had washed away even that sin. The word *"you will know after this" (John 13:7)* spoken when He washed his feet was fulfilled in that way. What we need, too, is not a greater confident declaration of our own faithfulness, but the faith that relies on the washing of sins the

Lord has already accomplished. Remember the fact that the Lord already knew even the weakness that came to light today. As a person He has washed, keep following the Lord with the confidence He has given. ✉

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Sermon 15 by Paul C. Jong

The two gifts of salvation that hold us fast

< Exodus 26:15–19 >

“And for the tabernacle you shall make the boards of acacia wood, standing upright. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the width of each board. Two tenons shall be in each board for binding one to another. Thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle. And you shall make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards for the south side. You shall make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards: two sockets under each of the boards for its two tenons.”

There are people who yesterday believed in the remission of sins and gave thanks, but today are startled to see evil thoughts coming out of themselves. Though they made up their minds to serve the Lord, they speak carelessly, and while strict about the wrongs of others, they attach reasons to their own wrongs. When they see such a self, their hearts ask: Am I really a person who has been saved? Since this sin has appeared, must I begin the work of washing sin again?

The boards in today’s text show us ourselves, who are exactly like this. God said to make the boards of the tabernacle of acacia wood. Acacia is a tree that grows with its roots planted in the soil, and it shows the root nature of man, who cannot help but sin. Boards made of such wood were gathered

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together and formed the house of God. People who have received the remission of sins become the house of God. Yet God did not simply set these boards on the ground; He had two tenons made in each board and two sockets of silver placed under them. Silver points to the gift of grace God freely gives. The strength by which the boards stood lay not in the boards but in the sockets God had prepared.

So when a wrong comes to light, there is no need to say that it is not there, nor to conclude that salvation has collapsed. Admit the wrong, but see whether what set us up was our conduct or the sockets God gave. If we say that at first we were saved by grace but from then on try to confirm the remission of sins by our own conduct, we have switched the sockets. What we need is not words that hide our shortcomings, but to know and believe the two gifts that set us up, lacking as we are.

A heart that admits sin cannot pay the price of sin

When people discover their sins, it is easy to think that sin will be washed away if only they are deeply in anguish. They think that if they pray longer, regret more deeply, and live a better life than before, they can draw near to God again. But a heart that hates sin and the resolving of the judgment of sin are different things. However clearly I remember the sins I committed and however many tears I shed, that memory and those tears cannot pay the price of sin in my place.

The more we realize our sin, the more we need the salvation God gives. Just as acacia wood could not stand in the house of God by its own strength, we, too, were not people who could stand before God by correcting a few wrongs. When we examine by the word even the sins that come out of our

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hearts, we come to know that by our own righteousness there is no way to escape judgment. The person who admits that about himself so honestly receives the gift of God. That He gave the gift of salvation means that the Lord accomplished that work in place of us, who cannot remove our sins by ourselves.

Look at the two sockets under the boards. While commanding that the boards be set up, God also appointed the sockets of silver that would support them. In the tabernacle there was not a single board that stood without a socket. Neither do we receive the grace of salvation after first having made ourselves perfect. We stand on the grace by which Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

The salvation the sockets of silver show is a gift God gave from beginning to end. If, while receiving a gift, I think that it becomes mine only if I pay its price, I have not yet received it as a gift. To think that in the end my prayers of repentance or my service must complete salvation is the same thinking. When we know clearly what the Lord accomplished, we do not miss the grace of salvation even while admitting sin.

The Lord knew my sins and received baptism from John

One of the two sockets of silver is the baptism Jesus received from John. It is the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, saying, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Jesus, who has no sin, did not go into the water to wash away any wrong of His own. In order to save sinners, He had the sin of the world transferred

onto His body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, who represents mankind.

Therefore, when we believe in the Cross, we must first know what sins were entrusted to Jesus, who hung there, and when. It is not that the One who has no sin was first nailed to the Cross and then sins were passed on to Him. Because He first had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He could die on the Cross because of that sin. When I believe that the One who had my sins passed on to Him died in my place, the assurance of the remission of sins arises.

A sin we discovered today is not a sin first made known to the Lord today. Within the sin of the world Jesus had transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John are the sins of our whole life. The heart that was afraid there might be a sin left out even after examining itself thoroughly finds rest when it believes in the Lord, who knew all sins and had them passed on to Him. Do not confine the scope of the remission of sins within the scope of your memory and confession.

Yet it does not end with His having had sins passed on to Him. For judgment follows sin. The second socket of silver is the blood of the Cross. Jesus, bearing the sin of the world, hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and Himself received the punishment of sin that was to come down on us. The baptism He received from John is a gift of salvation God gave, and the death of the Cross is also a gift of salvation. Jesus, who rose again from death, became our living Savior, and the person who believes in this salvation with his heart receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

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When we believe the two gifts together, the content of salvation becomes clear

Let us read verse 17 again.

"Two tenons shall be in each board for binding one to another. Thus you shall make for all the boards of the tabernacle."

Verse 19 says that the two sockets are *"for its two tenons."* One socket fits one tenon. God had not one but two tenons made in each board. If a board ten cubits high stood on a single tenon, it could turn on that tenon as an axis or slip out of the socket, but when two tenons are fixed in two sockets, the board stands immovable. And since God said, *"Thus you shall make for all the boards" (Exodus 26:17)*, there was not a single board in the tabernacle that stood without two tenons. The baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross are, like this, the two gifts of salvation that set sinners up.

The First Epistle of John also says that Jesus Christ came *"not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood –ASV" (1 John 5:6)*. His having had sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and His having received the judgment of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross are one salvation accomplished by one Savior. It is not that we take the place of one of the two or supplement it later.

A faith that stands on the one tenon of the blood of the Cross alone is shaken. Since it is not clear when one's sins were passed on to Jesus, one becomes anxious each time sin comes to light, as though the Lord had to be nailed again. Just as a board stands only when both tenons are fixed in the sockets, our faith stands without shaking when we believe in

the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross together.

This is not a word telling us to memorize two items of faith, but a word telling us to believe with our hearts that the One who had my sins passed on to Him and the One who received my judgment are both Jesus. The reason we examine the tabernacle in detail is also in order to believe that this salvation was accomplished for me. Do not say to others that Jesus washed away all sin while thinking that for you alone there is still sin for which you must pay.

Even without hiding our wrongs, the assurance of the remission of sins does not collapse

Even after being saved, the thoughts of the flesh rise up within us. Even so, we are standing because of the two sockets. A board may creak for a moment, but as long as its two tenons are fixed in the two sockets, it does not fall. So it is with the person who has received the two gifts of salvation.

Because Jesus, who had the sin of the world transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, offered Himself as the sacrifice of the Cross, as the Book of Hebrews says, *"There is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18)*. No other sacrifice can be added to the atonement already accomplished.

The Bible also says, concerning silver, *"Take away the dross from silver, And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry" (Proverbs 25:4)*. Even though evil and unclean thoughts rise up in our flesh, Jesus has completely taken away our sins through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, and has set us up as workers fit for God to use.

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Therefore, when a wrong comes to light, admitting it is not denying salvation. Rather, we come to rely only on the sockets God gave, without putting forward our own righteousness. Correcting a wrong, too, is not filling up the price of the Cross, but is the turning back of the person who believes in the Lord, who had even that sin passed on to Him.

The person who believes in the remission of sins is not a person who claims that there is no blemish in his deeds, but a person who believes that Jesus had his sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and ended their judgment on the Cross. So he lays down together both the insistence, ‘I have never done wrong,’ and the thought, ‘I am always a sinner to be judged.’ The former makes him hide his wrongs, and the latter keeps him from believing in the salvation of the Lord.

This faith makes a person honest. The person who fears that if he exposes his wrong he will also lose salvation wants to hide his wrong. But when he believes that the Lord had even that wrong passed on to Him, he can lay down his excuses and receive the teaching of the word. The person who admits his own weakness is rather the one who lives in the bright light.

The One who sets us up is God, who prepared the sockets

Dear fellow believers, what do the boards set up on the two sockets of silver make us look at? They make us see the sockets God prepared rather than the strength of the boards themselves. Under the twenty boards were forty sockets of silver, two for each board. We, too, take as the basis of salvation what Jesus accomplished through the baptism He

received from John and the blood of the Cross, rather than the size of our own resolution.

If you have not yet believed this salvation as your own, believe it now with your heart. If you have held on to the blood of the Cross alone, lay down the faith that tried to stand on one tenon and believe the two gifts together. When I admit that by my sins I cannot but be judged, and believe in Jesus Christ, who delivered me from those sins and that judgment, as the Savior, the person who was a sinner becomes righteous. Our hearts were shaken not because the Lord saved us insufficiently, but because, leaving aside the sockets He gave, we again looked for the basis of salvation in ourselves.

We who already believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have no reason to let go of the work of the Lord because of a wrong that came to light today. Admit the wrong and follow the word, but lay down the labor of trying to accomplish atonement again. The reason we can stand before the Lord is not that we have kept ourselves well, but that the Lord has saved us completely. Just as a board stands without shaking with its two tenons fixed in the two sockets of silver, our salvation, built on the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, is also immovable. ✉

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Sermon 16 by Paul C. Jong

Why we who received the same salvation serve together

< Exodus 26:26–30 >

“And you shall make bars of acacia wood: five for the boards on one side of the tabernacle, five bars for the boards on the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the far side westward. The middle bar shall pass through the midst of the boards from end to end. You shall overlay the boards with gold, make their rings of gold as holders for the bars, and overlay the bars with gold. And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain.”

If, while laboring for the gospel, we try to accomplish everything alone, the help of others feels like something that exposes our own shortcomings. We think that since I started the work, I must finish it, and since I labored at it, it must become my fruit. Conversely, there are also people who only watch the work of the church from a distance on the grounds that they have no special ability. The former trusts his own ability too much, and the latter sees only his own shortcomings. Both are missing the fact that the Lord has given us people to serve together with.

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God did not finish by setting up the boards of the tabernacle one by one. He had bars made of acacia wood and fitted: five to the boards on one side, five to the boards on the other side, and five to the boards on the west side, and had the boards joined together by passing the bars through rings of gold. He had the middle bar in the midst reach *"from end to end" (Exodus 26:28)*. In that way the boards that stood separately became one tabernacle. If the boards standing on sockets of silver are we who have received the remission of sins, the bars show the will of God, who binds those people into one. If I think only of myself as someone who has been saved, I cannot fully follow the will of the Lord, who works through the church.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a person called to shine alone. He has been called to serve the Lord together with those who have received the same salvation. Even if the work entrusted to each of us differs, the Lord who saved us is one, and the gospel to preach is also one. When we keep this fact in our hearts, the help of others becomes a cause for thanks, and even our own labor, which seemed small, comes to have a clear purpose.

Because the gifts we have received differ, we must combine our labor

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and

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through all, and in you all. But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:1–7).

Paul says, *"To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7)*. Having received the same salvation does not mean that all do the same work in the same way. But what Paul established first is oneness rather than difference. In light of the word that there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, we think of that one baptism Jesus received from John, by which He had the sin of the world passed on to Him. The basis on which we, who differ from one another, can serve together lies in this oneness rather than in the difference of gifts.

Until the gospel reaches one person, the labor of many people interlocks. Though the names of the tasks entrusted differ, we labor together so that the same gospel of the remission of sins may be preached. It is not shameful that someone else carries out the part I cannot carry out. The person who believes in the same Lord and faithfully carries out the work entrusted to him is a fellow worker, and when I admit the part I do not do well, the way to work together opens.

Conversely, there are also people who withdraw, regarding their own work as small. If you are doing the work entrusted to you so that the gospel may be preached, that labor is serving the Lord. Before putting it off, saying that someone else would do it better, carry out by faith the work entrusted to you today. Even if one has received the remission of sins, if he regards working together lightly, that faith does not show its proper light.

Only, moving busily together does not mean that all are serving the gospel. What we preach is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received

the judgment of that sin on the Cross. If we reduce or change its content in order to be praised by people, we lose the purpose of working together. Just as the tabernacle was raised up *"according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain" (Exodus 26:30)*, we, too, serve the gospel the Lord has given just as it is.

People who keep what He has already made one

To combine our different labors, what makes us one must be clear. Paul exhorts, *"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3)*. First the Spirit made us one, and we have been called to keep that oneness. When we receive the remission of sins by faith, peace comes upon our hearts, and in that peace we become one family in Christ. The word to be united within the church is not a demand to become people similar to one another, but the word to believe in and follow together the salvation Jesus has already accomplished.

Our unity does not come from the number of people, the same place, or long acquaintance. What matters first is whether each person knows with what Jesus washed away his sins and believes it with his heart. The boards of the tabernacle bound by the bars all first stood on two sockets of silver.

Jesus had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and bearing that sin, He shed His blood on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He overcame death and rose again. The person who believes in this gospel with his heart has all his sins washed away, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. Within the sin of the world that Jesus

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had passed on to Him are my sins and also the sins of my brothers and sisters. The gospel that saved me and the gospel that saved my brother are one, and the grace given to that person and the grace given to me are the same.

Therefore, when you think of unity, do not first ask whether the other person's character suits you. Think of the Lord, who saved him from sin. We lived in different circumstances and then believed in the same gospel and became children of God. Our hearts are in accord not because we know all about one another's appearance, form, or experience, but because we believe together in Jesus, who washed away our sins.

The middle bar of verse 28 shows this. The middle bar was in *"the midst of the boards"* and reached from end to end. This bar joining the middle of the boards shows a unity in which the centers of our hearts are in accord through faith. If, while seeing a person God has saved, we close our hearts only because he does not fit my standard, we are regarding lightly the family relationship the Lord has given. The reason to be united lies in the fact that one Lord has already saved us. Let us treat one another in a manner worthy of that grace.

In the face of a brother's shortcomings, remember the grace that saved you

Before the exhortation to keep what He has made one, there is the word to bear with one another in lowliness, gentleness, longsuffering, and love. Why is such an exhortation necessary for us, who believe in the same salvation? It is because even after being saved there are the shortcomings of the flesh. There are times when one another's words sound harsh, and times

when a work was entrusted but not carried out sufficiently. At such times, what the basis of unity is comes to light.

If we look at people by the standard of our own righteousness, the more we discover the other's shortcomings, the more we want to draw away. But I, too, am not a person who became a child of God by my own righteousness. I was saved because Jesus had all my sin transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. If so, what reason is there to demand of a brother who has received the same salvation a perfection that I did not have either? When I remember the fact that I stood by grace, my heart toward him changes.

We can teach him the word he does not know, and help him learn the work he cannot yet carry out. We can pray together and wait patiently for him to grow in faith. To be longsuffering is not to say that there is no problem. It is not abandoning the work of helping him with the word even when his shortcomings come to light, because we regard that person as a brother the Lord has saved.

Think especially of a person who has just received the remission of sins. He may still know little of the word and be unaccustomed to the life of faith. But if he has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the same Spirit as in us dwells in his heart as well. Just as the middle bar reached from end to end, no one is left out of the unity in which hearts are in accord through faith. It is not that one becomes a brother or sister only after learning for a long time; because we have already become brothers and sisters within the grace of the salvation we received, we help him learn and grow.

The person who helps someone, too, should not think as though he himself has no need of help. Supporting one another within the gospel is not a matter of one person always giving

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and another always receiving, but of taking part in the work of the Lord, who cares for and establishes each person. In such fellowship our own boasting lessens, and the heart that gives thanks for the salvation the Lord has given deepens.

The joy of being built together in the house of the Lord

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19–22).

God did not have us stay for a while as guests. He made us His own household, and causes us to be built together in Jesus. To live as a member of the family is different from merely watching and evaluating the work of others. It is to share responsibility and serve together, holding the same hope the Lord has given. Even a work I was not entrusted with, if it is for the gospel, I come to hold precious in my heart.

Verse 29 says to overlay the boards with gold, to make the rings through which the bars pass also of gold, and to overlay the bars also with gold. The boards, the rings, and the bars were all gold. In the Bible, gold shows the faith that believes the word of God. It is because of faith that we became boards of the house of God, and it is because of faith that we are bound together and our hearts are in accord. We do not unite in

order to be saved; because Jesus has already washed away our sins, we unite with those who have the same faith and serve.

Now ask yourselves. When a person who serves together with you has a better gift than you do, do you give thanks? When someone else carries on the work you started, do you rejoice? These questions are not meant to make us compete over whose faith is better, but to make us look back on whether the purpose of serving together is the Lord or ourselves.

If we work for the Lord, the fruit of someone else cannot be my loss. Helping a person who believes in the same gospel preach it better is helping the work of the Lord, and when the work entrusted to him is accomplished, we can rejoice together. Even when the work has become difficult, we do not dismiss it as one person's failure, but examine together what is needed. People united in the gospel share not only the fruit but also the labor.

God, who joined the boards of the tabernacle with bars, has today made us, too, serve together with the same faith. Lay down the heart that tries to accomplish all the work alone, and do not hide behind the thought that you have no ability. Hold precious the brothers and sisters the Lord has saved, learn what is to be learned, help where help is needed, and carry out by faith the work entrusted to you. What we are trying to preach is not the excellence of each one of us, but Jesus Christ, who completely saved sinners.

Give thanks first of all for the fact that He has given us people with whom we can serve together. Through that person He has enabled the work I could not do to be carried out, and has enabled me, by my small labor, to help others in their service. Just as the bars passed through the rings of gold bound the boards into one tabernacle, let us, too, who have been saved by one Lord, join our hearts for one gospel and rejoice together in its fruit. ✉

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Sermon 17 by Paul C. Jong

Why the despised Savior is precious to us

< Exodus 36:19 >

"Then he made a covering for the tent of ram skins dyed red, and a covering of badger skins above that."

< Isaiah 53:1–6 >

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 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. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

It is possible to see the Savior up close and still not esteem Him. Speaking of the suffering Lord, Isaiah tells us that people

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despised Him. Yet in the words that refer to those people, we are included too. We readily try to stand on the side that pities the One who suffers. But the word first reveals how we judged Him. It says that, not knowing what He bore, we reckoned His worth by His outward appearance alone.

Think of the topmost covering of the tabernacle. God had the covering above made of badger skins. The boards inside the tabernacle were overlaid with gold, but when one looked at the tabernacle from outside, the badger skins covering the top were what one saw. Covered with badger skins, the tabernacle was unsightly in outward appearance. This covering shows the appearance of Jesus Christ, who humbled Himself like a man and was despised in order to save us from sin. As Isaiah said, *"He has no form or comeliness" (Isaiah 53:2),* and there was nothing in Him for people to desire. Nevertheless, because of Him, we have salvation.

The badger skins also show our own appearance as we stood before God. We ourselves, who loved sin and lived as we pleased, were unsightly beings in the sight of God. Why is Jesus precious to you? Is it because He seems likely to exalt you and give you better circumstances than others? There are many things for which we seek the Lord's help. But the reason He is most precious to us is that He Himself bore our sins and judgment.

The One we regarded as lowly bore our sins

Let us read Isaiah 53:4–5.

"Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised

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for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed."

Two judgments appear in the word. Seeing Him being punished, we thought that there was a problem with Him Himself. But what He bore was our griefs, and the reason He was pierced was our transgressions. The One who went through the suffering was the Lord, but the ones who committed the sins for which that suffering had to be received were we. When we know this relationship, the heart with which we look at the Lord changes.

Even concerning our sins, we lived thinking that they were smaller than the sins of others. If we had a reason, we passed over lightly even having harbored evil thoughts or having lied. But when we look at our hearts as they are revealed before God, there is not a single person who can call himself righteous without the sacrifice of the Lord. The word tells us that all we like sheep have gone astray, every one to his own way. Do not stop at faulting the wrong of the people who despised Jesus; see that our sins are included in the sins He bore.

In Exodus 36:19, under the covering above, ram skins dyed red appear. It is a covering made by killing rams and dyeing their skins red. This covering shows the Savior, who shed His blood and sacrificed Himself on the Cross because He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. The One who was not esteemed by people gave up His own life to save us. The coverings of the tabernacle were not laid on for the sake of appearance, but concretely showed what He would do. His humbling of Himself and His sacrifice cannot be thought of separately.

If we take the suffering of the Lord merely as a story of a kindhearted person who suffered an injustice, we cannot know salvation. Jesus received in our place the judgment of sin that

we had to receive. What is needed, even before a heart that pities Him, is to know and believe what He accomplished for me. If the Lord bore my sins, I am not a spectator of Him but a person made alive by that sacrifice.

The Savior, who took on our sins through the baptism He received from John

The word that our sins were entrusted to the Lord is not a vague comfort. Isaiah prophesied, *"The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6)*. The method by which God entrusted our sins to Him is precisely the baptism He received from John. At the Jordan River, Jesus, saying, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, received baptism from John the Baptist, who represents mankind, and through that baptism He had all the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all. The One who has no sin did not stand before John to wash away His own sins, but came to receive our sins.

The coverings of the tabernacle also show this. God did not cover the tabernacle with only the two layers of badger skins and ram skins dyed red, but had it covered with four layers, down to the covering of goats' hair and the first covering, which contained blue thread, beneath them. If the baptism He received from John, which the blue thread points to, is left out, the picture of salvation is not complete with only the two coverings that show contempt and sacrifice.

Knowing this fact, look at the Cross. The blood Jesus shed on the Cross is the blood of judgment for our sin, which He took upon Himself through the baptism He received from John. The One who took on sin also received the punishment of that

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sin. He received all our sins onto His body and paid the price of those sins with His own life. It is not that the sacrifice of the Lord takes effect only after we have first washed away our sins; rather, because the Lord had sin transferred onto Him and received the judgment, we believe in that salvation.

Within that sin of the world are the sins you and I commit throughout our whole lives. If He had left some sins behind and told us to resolve the rest, we would never have obtained peace. Neither the contempt of people nor death could bring down His work of salvation. Jesus rose again from the tomb and became our living Savior. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, which He, who is God, accomplished by coming in the body of a man and through the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, has all his sins washed away, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes a child of God. The One we esteem is precisely this Savior.

In the salvation we received freely is the sacrifice of the Lord

We did not give our own lives to God as the price to receive the remission of sins. Jesus gave Himself up. Isaiah goes on to say that *"When You make His soul an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10)*, the will of God will be accomplished. The salvation we received freely is the salvation He bought by paying His own life as the price.

The ram skins dyed red show that price. Yet this covering was hidden by the badger skins that covered it. The price He paid lay beneath an unsightly outward appearance, and people,

seeing only the outward appearance, did not know what was beneath it.

Therefore, do not treat the gospel as merely a familiar story. Having heard many times the word that Jesus received baptism from John and shed His blood on the Cross cannot be a reason to regard even that love as small. If we believe without knowing that we were people bound for hell because of sin, we come to regard Jesus as a decoration that may or may not be there. When we know how fearful a judgment my sins demand, and who received that judgment in my place, the sacrifice of the Lord is precious anew.

The greatest blessing the Lord has given is that He delivered us from the judgment of sin we were to receive before God. When we know this grace, we do not doubt the whole of His love because of one circumstance that does not please us at the moment. It is because He has already given what was most urgent for us. While asking Him for today's needs, we can give thanks for the salvation already received.

What could be exchanged for this salvation? Even if people exalt me and I gain many of the good things of the world, the judgment of my sins does not disappear because of that. Hold precious above anything else the remission of sins the Lord gave by giving up His own life. Let us rely on the Lord with the faith that knows who it is that gave us life.

Even if the recognition of people is small, the love of the Lord is precious

Now let us look back on our service. We have a heart that wants to serve gladly only when we receive acknowledgment from people. Think again of the badger skins at the top of the

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tabernacle. Those skins kept off the wind and rain and protected the lampstand, the table of showbread, and the Ark beneath them, but they themselves had no beauty. The Lord, too, did not take glory for Himself, but came in a lowly form and delivered us from sin. We who have been saved by that Lord are not ashamed of labor done in a place where people do not acknowledge us.

In explaining the gospel again to a person who does not yet understand it, and in helping weak brothers and sisters to hear the word, there is much labor that does not catch the eye. Since God loved us, we, too, live helping and loving others. Our labor is not added to the atonement of the Lord, but because we know the heart of the Savior, who loved us first, we spend our remaining strength on preaching that love to those who do not yet know it.

Jesus, whom people did not esteem, has become for us a Savior more precious than life. That His appearance did not become something for people to boast of does not mean that His salvation was lacking. He actually bore our sins and ended their judgment. By believing in that love we became righteous and became children who call God Father.

Dear fellow believers, keep in your hearts what the Lord has done for us. Lay down the heart that will give thanks only if it receives something more, and hold precious that grace by which He delivered us from sin and judgment. Just as, when the tabernacle was seen from outside, badger skins covered it, but beneath them were ram skins dyed red, so beneath the lowly appearance of Jesus, who was despised, is His sacrifice in taking our sin upon Himself and being judged in our place. ✉

Sermon 18 by Paul C. Jong

The faith of the heart that enters by the opened way

< Exodus 26:31–33 >

“You shall make a veil woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen. It shall be woven with an artistic design of cherubim. You shall hang it upon the four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Their hooks shall be gold, upon four sockets of silver. And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy.”

When we have heard the word for a long time, we become able to speak accurately about salvation. But knowing how to say those words and that word having been fulfilled in one’s own heart are different things. There are people who, while explaining that Jesus washed away all sins, think that the sins of their own hearts must still be resolved by themselves. In their thinking they nod, saying, ‘So that is what it meant,’ but that word has not entered their hearts as something that concerns their own sins. What such a person needs, more than additional explanation, is to receive with the heart the word of salvation he is already hearing.

The veil in today’s text divided the holy place from the Most Holy. The ark of the Testimony was placed inside that veil, and even the priests who served daily in the holy place

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could not enter there as they pleased. The house of God was not a place anyone could go in and out of. Just as not everyone could enter simply because he knew much about what was inside the veil, knowledge about salvation is not in itself a heart that has received salvation. So we, too, must ask. Do I merely know the saying that Jesus is the way of salvation, or do I believe that He has resolved my sins and judgment?

The Bible speaks of this faith, saying, *"With the heart one believes unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10)*. Today, let us not hear this word only as a word that others need, but receive it as a word spoken to ourselves.

We cannot escape the judgment we must face by saying that we know sin

People easily say, 'Who is there without sin?' Everyone nods as far as saying that he, too, is a sinner. But most live without knowing what judgment they are to receive before God because of that sin. Since others live in much the same way, they regard themselves as having no special problem.

God speaks of the result of sin and the gift of salvation in this way.

"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 is death. If I admit that there is sin in my heart but do not receive the word that God judges that sin, I am still handling sin according to my own thinking. The judgment of God does not change because a sinner regards sin as small. Eternal life is not the result of my conduct but the gift God gives in Christ Jesus.

Even if we realize sin, if we regard it only as a matter of correcting a few kinds of conduct, our faith ends up as ethics and religious form. The fact that I am a person who must be judged for my sins is the most urgent problem that has fallen upon my soul. God said, *"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2)*. When we admit that fact before the word, the work of the Savior, who had sins passed on to Him in our place, becomes not someone else's story but a word concerning our own life.

However many years you have believed, if sin now remains in your heart, now is the time to resolve this problem. The fact that you can say the terms of the gospel accurately cannot take the place of the Savior those terms point to. Do not refuse the word being spoken to you today in order to defend the past.

The veil shows the content of the salvation we are to believe

God did not say that we can enter inside the veil if we are vaguely zealous. The four kinds of thread woven into the veil contain the work by which Jesus Christ saved sinners. Among them, the baptism He received from John, which the blue thread points to, and the blood of the Cross, which the scarlet thread points to, show that the One who had sins passed on to Him and the One who received their judgment are one Savior.

Only when this content of salvation is clear can we believe with our hearts. If we say we believe in Jesus but do not know how He washed away our sins, each time sin comes to light we look for our own methods again. We try to remove that sin by

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more earnest prayer or more service. But no other method to resolve my sins is needed.

Jesus, who is the God who created heaven and earth, came in the body of a man and received baptism from John at the Jordan River. Jesus, who has no sin, had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him at that time through the baptism He received from John. It is not that each time we believe we go back to the past and pass on our sins little by little; it is believing now with our hearts the fact that the Lord had the sin of the world transferred onto Him once and for all. On the Cross of the One who had the sin of the world passed on to Him is not only the judgment of the sins of others but also the judgment of my sins.

Jesus, bearing that sin, shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again from death. This salvation, planned from before the foundation of the world, was accomplished in Jesus Christ. The basis on which we draw near to God is not the merit we have offered to God, but the sacrifice the Lord offered for us.

The person who has received the remission of sins through this salvation becomes a child of God and receives the Holy Spirit. That there was no special sensation when we received the remission of sins does not mean that the Holy Spirit did not come. Because we believe the word that Jesus, who is God, saved me through the baptism He received from John, the judgment of the Cross, and the resurrection, we confess that we are His children. It is receiving into the heart the very salvation the gospel of the water and the Spirit preaches.

Believing with the heart is accepting the conclusion of the word

Even after hearing this far, one may think that he already knows it all. But what confession comes after the word 'know'? If one says that Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him yet regards his own sins alone as remaining, he is adding his own judgment to that word. Do not say that the work of the Lord is complete while leaving only your own salvation still unfinished.

To believe with the heart does not mean to make our emotions fervent, but to accept as fact the salvation God accomplished, over the judgments familiar to us. It is believing, as my own salvation, the word that Jesus took on my sins and also received the judgment for those sins in my place, rather than leaving it as knowledge unrelated to my sins.

The Bible speaks of the faith of the heart and the confession of the mouth together.

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9–10).

The salvation we confess with our mouths is that salvation we believe with our hearts. It is not a matter of changing our words and declaring ourselves without sin. Because Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, received their judgment on the Cross, and rose again from death, we believe in Him as the Savior and come unto righteousness. The righteousness man could not accomplish, Christ accomplished. Therefore the person who

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believes confesses that he has become righteous, without sin, before God.

The reason this confession is found difficult is often that shortcomings are still seen in one's own conduct. But we have shortcomings in the flesh together. The fact that there are shortcomings in the flesh cannot change the fact that the Lord's remission of sins is complete. We are not saying that we are people who have never sinned; we, who have sinned, believe that we have received the remission of all sins through the salvation of Jesus Christ.

This faith does not become an excuse for hiding wrongs. We admit that what we did wrong was wrong, but we do not make that admission a sacrifice that pays the price of my sins. The confession that I have no transgressions and the confession that the Lord has removed all my transgressions are different, and our faith comes from the second confession.

I am a person who cannot but go to hell because of sin, but the Lord saved me from all sins by the water and the blood. This is the confession of the person who believes with the heart. When the Book of Hebrews exhorts, *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22)*, it does not mean to stand outside until we feel we have grown enough. What we must do is not add our own merit to the way the Lord opened, but believe in that way with our hearts.

Receive the word you heard today as your own salvation

While hearing the word, it is easy to think that others need this kind of faith. But what we must ask about before the veil is my own faith. If I had to stand before God tomorrow, what

would I hold on to? Do I admit the judgment my sins will bring? Do I believe that Jesus had those sins passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John? Do I believe that He was judged in my place on the Cross and rose again from death and became my Savior? If I believe this word, the remission of sins is not a distant expectation but a gift God has given me.

If there is a part you do not yet clearly believe, do not cover it over, pretending to know. Go where a person who knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit preaches the word, and hear more. Confirm from the Bible what relationship the baptism Jesus received from John has with your sins, and what judgment was ended on the Cross. Do not put it off, thinking that someday faith will come of itself. Hearing and believing the word of salvation is the thing your soul needs most right now.

Even a person who has already believed this gospel sometimes has the thought of measuring salvation by what he sees in himself. At such times, confirm again from the word who the Savior is and what He has done for us. Our faith holds on not to our conduct but to the work of the Lord, who cleansed us who have sin. When this fact is clear, we can give thanks to the Lord even in the face of our shortcomings.

Do not be satisfied with knowing how to explain the veil of the tabernacle. The salvation of Jesus Christ revealed in that veil must become your own. The Lord has already accomplished the salvation that can set sinners before God, and He is alive even now and calls us. Believe with your heart that Jesus had all your sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and ended even their judgment on the Cross, and confess that faith with your mouth. ✉

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Sermon 19 by Paul C. Jong

The light of the gospel that washes away sin cannot be changed

< Exodus 27:20–21 >

“And you shall command the children of Israel that they bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to cause the lamp to burn continually. In the tabernacle of meeting, outside the veil which is before the Testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening until morning before the LORD. It shall be a statute forever to their generations on behalf of the children of Israel.”

As we preach the gospel, there are times when we watch the face of the listener more than the word we preach. A person who listened gladly at first finds it unfamiliar when we explain the baptism Jesus received from John. When we preach that Jesus had all the sin of the world passed on to Him at the Jordan River, he says that it differs from what he has believed until now. Some say that it sounds too harsh and self-righteous. At such times a conflict arises in our hearts. It is the thought that if we put this part off a little and speak only of things everyone likes, he might keep listening.

Explaining the word simply and showing consideration for the listener are necessary. But if we leave out the work of the Lord, who washed away that person’s sins, what are we telling

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him to believe? If we preach the name of Jesus but hide how Jesus had our sins passed on to Him, the listener will still try to resolve his own sins by his own strength. What we hope for is not a good reaction for a moment, but a person who believes with his heart in the salvation the Lord accomplished and receives the remission of sins.

God told Israel to tend the lamp of the holy place so that it would not go out. In that command are contained not only the responsibility of the person who keeps the fire, but also what the light is to be lit with and to whom He entrusts that work. Today, before this word, let us examine whether the gospel we believe and the gospel we preach are the same. If we believe that the salvation that washed away my sins is the gospel of the water and the Spirit but do not preach that salvation fully to others, how will that person obtain the same remission of sins?

God appointed the oil with which to light the lamp

The people of Israel had to bring pure oil of pressed olives. Aaron and his sons lit the lamp with that oil and tended it from evening until morning outside the veil before the ark of the Testimony. The people were entrusted with bringing it, and the priests with tending the lamp. The work entrusted differed, but all worked for the lamp God had appointed.

The place where that lamp was lit was the holy place outside the veil. The holy place was screened on all sides by curtains, with no opening for sunlight to enter. Without the lamp, the holy place could not but be always dark. Yet God did not leave the oil for lighting that light to people's circumstances. Neither the oil the priests wished to use nor the oil convenient for the people to bring could be the standard.

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God appointed the oil, and because it was a work undertaken and served before God, people could not change it according to their own thinking.

This pure oil points to the Holy Spirit. To be pure means that nothing else is mixed in, and in that pure oil is contained the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which God saved us. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in this gospel. Peter, too, preached that when one obtains the remission of sins, *"You shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38)*. Because there is no sin in the heart, the Holy Spirit, who is holy, comes into that heart. Sin is not washed away by our being moved or by a long religious life. We receive the remission of sins when we know how the Lord removed our sins and believe in that salvation in our hearts.

Therefore, the light the church shines also has definite content. Like the lamp that lit the holy place, the light the church shines on the world is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The zeal of the gathered people alone cannot shine the light of salvation. Before speaking of how moved a person was, we preach what Jesus did for sinners. Just as the lamp of the holy place was lit with the oil God appointed, we, too, light the hearts of people with the truth of the salvation God accomplished.

We, too, are people who received this light first. Like the holy place without a lamp, our hearts, which were dark because of sin, could not become bright by themselves. The word that Jesus had all our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and ended the judgment of those sins on the Cross lit our hearts and delivered us from sin. Other souls, too, need precisely this light.

He was judged on the Cross for the sin He bore at the Jordan River

Jesus is not One who vaguely suffered pain without knowing our sins. Jesus, who is God, came clothed in the body of a man and actually accomplished the work of saving sinners. Within that work of salvation is the baptism Jesus received from John.

Verse 21 of today's text did not entrust the work of tending the lamp to just anyone, but entrusted it to *"Aaron and his sons."* Only the family of Aaron, the high priest who offered sacrifices before God on behalf of Israel, did this work from generation to generation. Now, John the Baptist, who gave Jesus baptism at the Jordan River, is precisely a descendant of this Aaron. The Bible introduces John's parents in this way.

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth" (Luke 1:5).

Jesus, who has no sin, came to John, a descendant of Aaron, in order to have the sin of the world passed on to Him. In the sacrifices the house of Aaron had undertaken from generation to generation, sins were passed on to the offering by the laying on of hands. According to that law, Jesus had all the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, a descendant of Aaron. The work Aaron and his sons had undertaken before God from generation to generation was fulfilled at the Jordan River.

Because of that sin which had been passed on to Him at the Jordan River, Jesus was nailed to the Cross. His shedding His blood and dying on the Cross was not merely showing us an example of patient endurance. The One who had our sins

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passed on to Him received in our place the judgment of sin we had to receive. And He rose again from death and became the Savior of mankind.

So the person entrusted with the lamp preaches together what John the Baptist did and what Jesus did. John, the descendant of Aaron, passing on the sin of the world, and Jesus, who had that sin passed on to Him, being judged on the Cross, are what the Lord accomplished as one salvation. We cannot pick and preach only one side according to our preference. To believe this salvation as it is is complete faith, and to preach it as it is is shining the light of the remission of sins.

Your sins, too, are within that sin of the world. Jesus had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him once and for all, and received the judgment of all that sin on the Cross. Therefore the person who believes in this gospel is righteous before God not because his own conduct is perfect, but because the Lord removed that sin.

The Spirit testifies of the salvation accomplished by the water and the blood

The truth that washes sin is not decided by whether people's reactions are good or bad. What we believe and preach is decided by what God has done and the written Word. Even if the people of the whole world do not accept it, this gospel must be preached in this way. The apostle John says, *"There are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood –ASV" (1 John 5:8)*.

The Spirit testifies that Jesus came by water and blood. The water and the blood the Spirit testifies of point to the salvation by which Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the

baptism He received from John and shed His blood on the Cross to receive their judgment. We cannot push away this content of salvation while saying that we long for the work of the Spirit. Receive into your hearts the gospel the Spirit testifies of, and believe it as it is.

The water baptism we receive after being saved does not blur this fact either. It is not that a person obtains the remission of sins by receiving water baptism; because he has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he receives water baptism as a sign that testifies of and confesses that faith. What we confess by water baptism is the faith that Jesus already took away my sins through the baptism He received from John and ended their judgment on the Cross.

A person hearing the gospel for the first time may not understand everything all at one time. At such times, listen to what he finds difficult and explain the word step by step. If he does not know who John the Baptist is, explain the laying on of hands in the Old Testament and John, the descendant of Aaron, in connection with each other, and if the word righteous is unfamiliar, teach him the difference between the atonement of the Lord and our conduct. Consideration is needed that explains differently to each person, and many times over. Erasing the fact of salvation to fit the other person's existing thoughts is not the way to help that soul.

Nor do we hold on to this word in order to defeat the person we preach to. We hold on to it in order to help that person know and believe the fact that Jesus washed away his sins. Do not get angry hastily at the other person's questions. But do not treat the baptism Jesus received from John as a meaningless event either, in order to win that person's heart. We can explain warmly and still preach the content of salvation clearly.

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Showing, just as it is, the way God washed away sin is loving the soul.

The person who hears today also needs complete salvation

God did not say to light the lamp once and forget it. He had Aaron and his sons tend that lamp *"from evening until morning"* always. To tend means to watch over and keep it so that it does not go out. The priests could not replace tonight's service with the fact that they tended the lamp yesterday, and they had to keep this work from generation to generation. We, too, cannot say that we have filled the need of those who will hear in the future merely by the fact that we spoke the gospel once before.

Moreover, this work was *"a statute forever to their generations."* However the trends of people change, the law God established does not change. There was a time in Israel when people changed this statute. Jeroboam made two golden calves and set them in Bethel and Dan, and the Bible records, *"This thing became a sin" (1 Kings 12:30)*. He also made priests from ordinary people who were not of the sons of Levi, and moved the feast as well to *"the month which he had devised in his own heart" (1 Kings 12:33)*. When the priests and the sacrifices God had appointed were changed according to human convenience, the people lost the way to return to God. A gospel from which the baptism He received from John has been removed for the comfort of the listener has also already departed from the lamp God appointed.

To a person who has heard the gospel for a long time, it is a familiar word, but to the person hearing it today it may be the word by which he first realizes how his sins were removed. If

the one who believed first omits the most necessary explanation on the grounds that it is familiar, the one who hears later does not learn the content of salvation. Do not presume a person's faith because he seems to know the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. Confirm together from the word what he believed for his sins to be removed.

The lamp was lit inside the holy place. Our faith, too, easily grows dim if it is left alone by itself. When we are pressed by the evaluations of people, it becomes hard to preach clearly with our mouths the truth we believed in our hearts, and we come to want to change the gospel little by little to suit what the listener thinks. That is why God has placed us within the church that believes in the same gospel. In the place where we hear the word together and serve the gospel, faith is kept, and the heart that was being dragged along by the opinions of people turns back to the will of the Lord.

What the person who has heard the command to tend the lamp needs is not the ability to produce a new salvation. It is the faith that holds precious what God has entrusted. The Lord has fully accomplished the work of saving us. Just as nothing else was mixed into the pure oil, we do not add our own thoughts to that salvation, but believe and preach it just as we received it. Even if there are difficulties while preaching, do not change even the content of the remission of sins.

Dear fellow believers, the most precious news we can give to people is the fact that Jesus had all our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and ended even their judgment on the Cross. Jesus, who broke death and rose again, is the Savior we are to preach. Believe with your hearts that He washed away your sins, and preach that complete salvation to other souls as well. Though the reactions

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of listeners may differ, the work of the Lord, who washed away our sins, does not change. The light the church is to keep from generation to generation is precisely this gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

Sermon 20 by Paul C. Jong

The light of the gospel that different members shine together

< Exodus 25:31–37 >

“(And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers, shall be of one piece with it—ASV) And six branches shall come out of its sides: three branches of the lampstand out of one side, and three branches of the lampstand out of the other side. Three bowls shall be made like almond blossoms on one branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower, and three bowls made like almond blossoms on the other branch, with an ornamental knob and a flower—and so for the six branches that come out of the lampstand. On the lampstand itself four bowls shall be made like almond blossoms, each with its ornamental knob and flower. And there shall be a knob under the first two branches of the same, a knob under the second two branches of the same, and a knob under the third two branches of the same, according to the six branches that extend from the lampstand. Their knobs and their branches shall be of one piece; all of it shall be one hammered piece of pure gold. You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it.”

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While doing the work God has entrusted to us, there are times when we magnify what we do not have. When we see a person who explains the word well, we think, ‘I cannot speak well,’ and when we see a person who handles what is needed skillfully, we think, ‘Since I have no such talent, I will probably be of no help.’ And so, though we have a heart that loves the gospel, we step back from the actual labor. Conversely, the person who has something he does well easily supposes, ‘If I do it, it will be faster and better.’ It is as if one side says, ‘I am a poor flower-calyx,’ and the other says, ‘I am a fine flower-calyx.’ What benefit is there to the lampstand in the flower-calyxes claiming to be finer than one another?

Look at the lampstand God made. There is not only the shaft. There is the base and the shaft, there are the branches, and there are the bowls, the ornamental knobs (flower-calyxes), and the flowers. God said of the six branches on both sides that they should be made alike—*“So for the six branches that come out of the lampstand” (Exodus 25:33)*—but He made the base, the shaft, the bowls, the ornamental knobs, and the flowers each with a different shape and a different use. He joined all those parts in one piece of pure gold, and placed seven lamps on it so that they would give light in front of it. Through this word we learn why different members must be together.

He joined them to one another in one piece of gold

What appears repeatedly in the text is joining. Within the seven verses the expression *“of one piece”* or *“of the same”* appears five times, and four of those refer to being joined to the shaft. Both the branches and the ornamental knobs were first joined to the shaft. Because they were attached to the shaft, the

branches on one side and the branches on the other side formed one lampstand. They were one not because the parts held on to one another, but because all of them came out of one shaft.

The shaft of the lampstand is the source from which all the branches come out. The head and source of the church is Jesus Christ. The way we are joined to one another also begins first from being attached to Jesus. If people only gather their intentions among themselves without being joined to Jesus, though the shape may look similar, that does not become the lampstand of God. When people who are attached to the Lord by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit serve together within that faith, they become the church.

Just as the bowls, ornamental knobs, and flowers on every branch all came out of one shaft, the different labors within the church also come out of one purpose: to have a soul hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. To be united does not mean that everyone has the same talent. Each works in the place entrusted to him according to the gift he has received, but that work serves the same Lord and is directed toward the same gospel.

Pay attention also to the method of making the lampstand. God did not say to make pieces of gold separately and attach them, but said to make it of pure gold *"of beaten work" (Exodus 25:31)*. One piece of gold was beaten and stretched to bring out the branches and the ornamental knobs. The person who has become a part of the lampstand also lays down the thoughts of his own flesh and his own rightness before the will of God. The heart that acknowledges a brother or sister who does well what I cannot do, and helps him with the work entrusted to me, comes from a faith that has been hammered and shaped in this way.

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What made us one is the same remission of sins

When the text speaks of the parts of the lampstand, it names the base first. Only when there is a base does the shaft stand, and only when the shaft stands do the branches and flowers rise. What becomes the foundation of the church is the salvation the Lord accomplished. Liking the same work or having well-matched personalities cannot take the place of this foundation. God did not gather us by our own righteousness, but set us on the remission of sins Jesus gave.

Jesus came to this earth clothed in the body of a man in order to save us from sin. And through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him, without distinguishing the sins of the person who does his work well from the sins of the person who always feels lacking. Bearing that sin, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He, who rose again, is our Savior, living even now.

The person who has received this gospel into his heart becomes a child of God not because he does his work well, but through the salvation Jesus accomplished. Nor is that salvation lacking because he is clumsy at his work. The basis of our faith is not our labor but Jesus, who had the sins of a whole lifetime passed on to Him and paid the price of those sins.

Since the salvation we have already received is the same, we have no basis for setting up our own righteousness over other members. Among the ornamental knobs of the lampstand, too, there were large ones and small ones. But there was only a difference in size; that all of them were ornamental knobs did not change. Whether a person received the remission of sins long ago or received it only recently, he believes with his heart in the same salvation Jesus accomplished. Therefore the one

who believed first, rather than putting down the one who has newly believed, helps him learn the word and use the gift he has received.

Paul says to the church, *"There is one body and one Spirit" (Ephesians 4:4)*. The Lord we serve together is one, and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us is also one. The hope of our salvation is the same as well. If people who have received the remission of sins through the same gospel compete to become a greater flower-calyx than one another, they are forgetting the grace we have received. If my being regarded as more important comes before serving the Lord together, let us turn that heart back before the word.

The labor of other members makes my labor possible

When we see a person who does some work well, we easily fix our gaze on that person alone. But so that the one person seen in front can do the work entrusted to him, there is the labor of many people who quietly carry it out behind him. There is no work accomplished solely by the ability of the one person seen in front.

The ornamental knobs of the text do not appear just once and no more. In the short seven verses, ornamental knobs appear eight times. On the shaft, on the branches on one side and the other, and at every place where two branches divide, there was an ornamental knob. It is as if there were ornamental knobs upon ornamental knobs. That we heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins was also because there were countless flower-calyxes that supported that gospel before us. My labor became possible on the labor of those who went before.

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God has spoken of how the members should see one another.

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you'; nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Corinthians 12:18–26).

If all the members were of only one shape, they could not form a body. That the functions of the eye, the hand, and the foot differ from one another is not a defect but a difference needed for the body. Therefore, do not measure the worth of other members by the gift you have. Let the person accustomed to speaking not regard as trivial the labor carried out without words, and let the person entrusted with work that is not easily seen not regard his own service as useless. The members God has set in the body need one another.

The ornamental knob of the lampstand need not have the same shape as the flower. The flower-calyx does the work of supporting the flower. The flower is Jesus Christ and the salvation He accomplished, and we, who serve so that this salvation is revealed, are the flower-calyxes of the gospel. If

the flower-calyx stands out more than the flower, that flower ends up an unsightly flower. If we strive to change our own place into a flower, we put ourselves ahead of the Lord, who is the One to be revealed. What matters to us is whether the salvation Jesus accomplished is preached through my labor.

On every branch the bowl and the ornamental knob were paired. Just as the flower-calyx did not stand alone, the strength with which we support the gospel also comes from the grace of God, poured out in due season. Having become a flower-calyx does not mean doing that work by one's own strength. So do not boast as though you carried it out alone, but hold precious both the labor of the members who worked with you and the grace of God that made that labor possible.

When we combine the work entrusted to us, we serve the will of the Lord together

Knowing unity does not end with saying that others are also needed. It goes as far as actually acknowledging the help I have received and sharing the labor that is needed. Whatever we do, we first examine whether that work is what the Lord delights in and what the gospel needs, and join our hearts.

Let the person who feels that his gifts are lacking not think that he must look for a great task from the start. Hear what is needed among the work the church is serving together now, and take on what you can do. The world of faith cannot be learned alone, however hard one tries. While we learn and serve together, the gift the Lord has given comes to be used, and faith also grows.

The one who came first is a flower-calyx that serves well the one who came later. Do not regard the person who learns later as

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a nuisance, but let him know what the work is for. However, being unconditionally kind to him is not the way to make that soul prosper. Correct him by the standard of the word and the purpose of the gospel, but remember that you, too, learned and grew by the labor of the flower-calyxes that went before.

Even a person who does many things well cannot serve the gospel without the help of Jesus. Whatever gift one has received, if one makes that gift the evidence of his own strength, it becomes hard to listen to others. At that time, examine in the light of the word whether what you are trying to establish is the will of the Lord or your own plan. If it is wrong, admit it, saying, 'I am not right.' The moment you admit it like that, the darkness that was covering your heart is lifted. The person who rejoices more that the gospel is preached rightly than that his own opinion is adopted is a fellow worker.

Think of the grace by which the Lord saved us and placed us in the church. To us, who could not wash away our sins by ourselves, Jesus gave the complete remission of sins through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. Now we can combine the time, talents, and labor the Lord has given so that this salvation may be preached to other souls as well. This is not a matter of adding to salvation, but the blessing of serving together the salvation we have received.

The last word of the text is to place the seven lamps on it so that *"they give light in front of it" (Exodus 25:37)*. When the base, the shaft, the branches, and the ornamental knobs were all in their places, the lamps at the top gave light in front. The reason the church is on this earth also lies in shining the light of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Great or small, we are all flower-calyxes. Holding one another precious, let us with one heart give our support, each in the place entrusted to us, so that Jesus Christ and His salvation are revealed. ✉

Sermon 21 by Paul C. Jong

The word of life we must eat today as well

< Leviticus 24:5–9 >

“‘And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. And you shall put pure frankincense on each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD. Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute.’”

There are times when, while hearing the word, we think we know what will be said next. It is because we have heard many times of the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood He shed on the Cross. So at the mere mention of ‘the water and the blood’ we close our hearts, saying it is tiresome. With our mouths we can give the right answer, but when our own sins come to light or our hearts are discouraged, we draw no strength from that word of salvation. Not knowing the word is a problem, but no longer wanting to eat it on the grounds that we know it is also a great problem for us.

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The body cannot skip eating today because it ate yesterday. Our souls, too, live only by eating every day. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not merely a word needed only when we first receive the remission of sins; it is the food of life by which we, who have received the remission of sins, believe and live today as well. Looking at the bread that was always placed before God, let us examine what our hearts are eating now.

The priests who set out the bread also ate that bread

In the text God had twelve loaves of bread made of fine flour and set in order in two rows, six in a row. On them He had pure frankincense placed, and every Sabbath He had the bread set before God. This service did not end with the bread having been set out once. God ordained that the bread be placed there continually.

Here, do not think only of the shape of the bread, but see to whom that bread went. Verse 9 says that this bread is for Aaron and his sons, and *"they shall eat it in a holy place."* This bread was not bread to be eaten just anywhere. Those who opened the door of the holy place and went in ate it inside the holy place. The one who eats this bread today is the person who believes that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and was sacrificed on the Cross and saved us. Everyone who believes in this way eats the bread of life within the Church of God.

The priests who ate that bread were the ones who set out and handled the bread before God. The fact that they knew the work of the holy place well did not take the place of eating.

Nor did being entrusted with the service make them people who needed no food.

We, too, as we hear and teach the word, easily come to think of ourselves only as people who explain rather than people who eat. We may explain the gospel in detail to a newcomer while not receiving that word into our own hearts. The fact that we have taught many people does not fill the empty place in our own hearts. Those who believed first, and those who preach the word, also need the food the Lord gives.

The food we must eat today is the salvation of the Lord, who washed away our sins. The Church of God is the place where this word of life is eaten together. With the words of religion, 'Live a good life, live virtuously,' the soul is not filled. When we hear and believe in the remission of sins Jesus accomplished for us, the heart that was pressed down by sin gains freedom and gains strength to serve the Lord.

We cannot hold on to so great a salvation merely because we have heard it

What the person who often hears the word must beware of is mistaking familiarity for faith. When he hears, he understands the content, and if someone says it wrongly, he can even correct him. But if he does not examine with that knowledge what he himself relies on, he becomes a person who knows the truth yet does not hold on to it with his heart.

The Bible warns those who have already heard in this way.

"Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how

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shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" (Hebrews 2:1–4).

This warning was given to those who have heard. It says to give the more earnest heed to the word they have heard. It is the exact opposite of saying that since we have heard, we may now let go of our attention. When a person regards lightly the great salvation God confirmed, he comes to depart from the word of life. Even a believer, even one who knows, can lose that word if he does not always hold on to it firmly.

Think of the table on which this bread was placed. When making the table, God had *"a frame of a handbreadth all around" (Exodus 25:25)* made and a gold molding put around it. Unlike the low rim of a table used at home, this frame surrounded the table so that the bread would not fall from it. Here we learn the faith that holds on with the heart to the word of salvation the Lord has given. If we only know it and do not hold on to it with the heart as the years pass, the bread falls off as from a table without a frame, and in the end it becomes a table without bread.

This frame is also a line. There are cases where, even after hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, a person leaves the faith he believed before as it is and lays the new word on top of it. Outwardly he speaks of the new gospel, but the root of his heart is still in the old faith. The gospel he explains in words and what his heart actually relies on are different from each other. What is needed at this time is not memorizing the right answer once more, but admitting what, until now, I have been trying to resolve the problem of sin with.

Do not set side by side, as the same thing, the faith that believed in the blood of the Cross alone, leaving the baptism Jesus received from John as something unrelated to salvation, and the faith that believes in the salvation He accomplished by the baptism and the blood. A clear line must be drawn between the time before salvation and the time when this gospel came to be believed in the heart. Even if it was a faith you held for a long time, if it did not remove your sins, admit that wrong. Admitting it late is not something to be ashamed of. That is the most honest and the fastest way. And believe now in the salvation the Lord has given.

No one else can draw this line in your place. Do not borrow someone else's confession. My heart does not come to believe simply because someone else regards my faith favorably. God looks at our hearts. Do not turn away from the present heart while striving to explain the faith of the past. Do I now believe that all my sins were removed by the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross? Answer this question with the word.

What makes us live is the flesh and blood of the Lord

When told to keep eating the word, some people first calculate what and how much they must hear for it to be enough. First we must know what the food is. Jesus called Himself the bread of life and gave us His own flesh and blood.

"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living

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Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me" (John 6:54–57).

The Lord said that the one who feeds on Him lives because of Him. The One who makes us live is Jesus. Then what is it to eat the bread inside the holy place? It is faith. Eating the bread of life is not putting bread in the mouth or piling up religious explanations, but believing with the heart what the Lord did to save us.

Jesus came in the body of a man to make us, who have sin, live. And when He was baptized by John at the Jordan River, He said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. That He fulfilled all righteousness means that He had all the sin of the world passed on to Him at that time.

What Jesus had passed on to Him through this baptism He received from John was not only the few wrongs we remember. He had your sins and the sins of the whole world, the sins of ancestors and even the sins of descendants yet to be born, transferred onto His body. Believing this fact, that Jesus came clothed in the flesh and had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, is the faith that eats the flesh of the Lord.

Jesus, bearing those sins, shed His blood on the Cross and received in our place the judgment sinners had to receive. And on the third day after He died He rose again, and for forty days He showed Himself and testified, and ascended into heaven. When we believe all these things—that He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and rose again and became our eternal Savior—we eat the flesh and blood of the Lord. When this gospel is believed deep in the heart, the Holy Spirit comes upon that heart, and we become children of God.

The Lord said that the one who believes has eternal life. He did not say that one gains life someday only after piling up more of his own deeds. The flesh and blood of Jesus are sufficient salvation. When we believe in this salvation, our hearts come alive.

The same salvation becomes food for today's heart as well

Then why must the person who has received the remission of sins keep eating the gospel? It is not because the atonement the Lord accomplished is lacking. The ones who are lacking are we. We are discouraged when we look at ourselves, we judge by looking at our circumstances, and at times we boast of our own labor. Even a saved person, as he lives in the world, finds his thoughts growing dim and his heart growing empty. This heart must return again to the salvation of the Lord and rely on Him.

That is why God places us in the church and has us eat this bread every day. A person worn out in the world comes to church, hears the word, and finds pasture and gains strength. A heart that had grown dim also becomes whole again as it hears the word in the church. And the person who eats the bread every day grows. The person who eats the bread of life every day grows in wisdom, understanding, and faith.

The same gospel corrects our wrong thoughts today. It is not that it is new because the content of salvation changes each time. It is the unchanging truth that holds up today's heart. Therefore, when you hear the word, do not only wait to see whether a new story comes out. Lay your heart open before the

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word you already know, and hear what you must believe and what you must throw away.

To keep eating does not mean being saved anew each time either. Verse 8 of the text calls this work of setting out the bread every Sabbath *"an everlasting covenant."* Though the bread was newly placed every Sabbath, the covenant did not change. The salvation the Lord accomplished once and for all remains as it is, and we live today as well by that salvation. The heart that demands atonement again and the heart that believes again in the completed atonement and gives thanks are different.

Eat the bread of life, beginning with those entrusted with the word

Dear fellow believers who believed first, do not put off your own eating of the word because you are doing the work of sharing the word. Without believing yourself, you cannot preach to others. Examine your own heart as much as when you confirm the salvation of others. For the person who only tells others to eat while not eating himself, soon only words remain. Even while speaking the same truth, the thanks to the Lord and the joy of salvation in his heart may disappear.

Hear the word together within the Church of God. Before weighing who is preaching, or how new and smooth the expressions are, receive the salvation of the Lord revealed in that word. If there is something you do not know, ask. If you had been relying in your heart on another method of salvation, do not hide it, but learn the truth clearly. Let the one who believed first also not hastily judge that the learner already

knows it all, but explain sufficiently what one believes to receive the remission of sins.

When we eat the food of the word together, there is no reason to show off the knowledge I have even when preaching to others. I come to preach the Lord, who made me live. Because that grace is precious in our own hearts, we come to wish that the person who still lives bearing sin in his heart would also believe in this salvation. Eating and sharing are connected in this way.

Today, too, eat the bread the Lord has given. Do not push away the word of life by saying that you have already heard it. Treasure yesterday's testimony, but today's heart must also believe the same truth. Jesus, who took away all our sins through the baptism He received from John, received all that judgment on the Cross and rose again on the third day. This salvation makes us live today as well. Hold firmly, with the frame of your heart, that word that made us live, and live today, too, because of the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 22 by Paul C. Jong

Faith offered today as well, while problems remain

< Exodus 25:23–30 >

“You shall also make a table of acacia wood; two cubits shall be its length, a cubit its width, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it with pure gold, and make a molding of gold all around. You shall make for it a frame of a handbreadth all around, and you shall make a gold molding for the frame all around. And you shall make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings on the four corners that are at its four legs. The rings shall be close to the frame, as holders for the poles to bear the table. And you shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be carried with them. You shall make its dishes, its pans, its pitchers, and its bowls for pouring. You shall make them of pure gold. And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always.”

There are times when we think that once the difficulties at home are resolved, we will serve the Lord with all our hearts. If life becomes a little more comfortable, worries about our children lessen, and the work entrusted to us goes smoothly, it seems we could live by faith. So we put off the response of faith we should make today to the day when circumstances improve. But when one problem ends, another problem appears. Living in this world, who is there without worries and anxieties?

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When does the Lord require faith of us? Does He receive our faith only when everything is settled and there is not a single thing weighing on our hearts? The bread always placed before God makes us think about this question. This table of showbread was inside the holy place, where those who opened the door of the holy place and went in—that is, the saved—lived. Through this table of showbread we learn the faith that keeps relying, in daily life, on God, who saved us. Today, too, while problems remain, there is faith to offer to God.

Place our today, as those who have been saved, before God

The table of showbread was to be made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. Acacia wood is a wood that burns up when put into fire. We humans, weak vessels, are like this wood. Just as that wood, overlaid with pure gold, was placed inside the holy place made of gold, we, too, who have been clothed with the salvation of God, now live inside the house of God. And God did not have only the table made and then leave it empty. He had the showbread placed on it. Let us read verse 30.

"And you shall set the showbread on the table before Me always."

The bread had to be before God always, and every Sabbath new bread was placed there. When we see this word in the light of today's faith, we learn that a saved person does not end his trust in God with a confession of one moment, but lives offering it continually.

It is not that God must eat food in order to gain strength. God does not demand physical food; He wants us to believe in

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Him. Just as God gives us the bread of life, we, too, offer the bread of faith before God. To offer God the bread of faith is to believe His word and to rely on Him working in our daily lives as well. After saving us, God did not abandon us to live on our own.

When we lived outside the holy place, we had to live by sorting out everything on our own. But after being saved and entering the holy place, things changed. Even so, in matters of making a living, family problems, and the work entrusted to us, we still tend to lay all the responsibility on our own shoulders alone. Then, when we grow weary, our strength drains away and we come to want to lay down even our faith. We had been holding out alone without relying on God.

Bring your day, too, before God. Faith is not a word used only during the hour of worship. Tell God of the matters your wisdom cannot resolve, the people your strength cannot change, and the circumstances in which no way to provide what is needed can be seen. To live today with the faith that God cares for me and leads me is the life that offers the bread of faith before Him.

We can entrust our daily lives, too, to the Lord, who bore our sins

On what basis can we rely on God like this? By vaguely encouraging ourselves that things will turn out well, the heart cannot endure long. We must know who God is to us. He is Jesus, who personally sacrificed Himself to save us from sin.

Jesus, the Son of God, came in the body of a man. And through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, He had the sins of all of us, including the sins of our children

and the sins of our parents, passed on to His own body. The Jordan River is the river of death and resurrection. Bearing those sins, Jesus was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment of sin we had to receive. And He broke the power of death and rose again. To us who believe in this salvation with our hearts, all sins have been remitted, and He gave us the Holy Spirit and made us live as children of God.

Here lies the reason we can bring our circumstances to God. We did not become His children because we managed our lives well. Nor were we accepted by God because we were people strong enough to have no anxieties. We became His children by believing in the sacrifice by which Jesus removed all our sins through the baptism He received from John and the Cross. The One to whom we entrust all our anxieties is precisely Jesus Christ, who loved us like this, let Himself be sacrificed, and saved us.

There are people who, seeing their own shortcomings, say that they feel too sorry even to ask God for help. Shortcomings must be honestly admitted. But if you only lament your faithless self and do not go to the Lord, to whom will you go? He is not One who said He would help us only when we were excellent. Knowing our sins and weakness, He bore sins on His own body. Entrust your own circumstances, too, to that Savior. There is no reason for a person who believes in the grace of salvation to live in daily life like a person who has nothing to do with God.

Offering faith to God is not repaying the price of the salvation already received, but a child relying on his father. Jesus accomplished the remission of sins, and since we have received that grace, we bring the problems of daily life, too, to Him and respond by faith.

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God delights in the faith that seeks Him

The Bible says clearly what we must believe when we draw near to God.

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

In the verse just before, it says of Enoch that *"he had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5)*. Enoch walked with God and lived by faith every day. The statement that "God is" is not a fact to be acknowledged only with the mouth. He is alive and sees us. He hears our supplications and is the One who answers those who seek Him. We pray, but God answers. When we offer the bread of faith, God receives that faith and answers our prayers.

This faith grows in daily life. In verse 29, He had even the dishes, pans, pitchers, and bowls for pouring on the table all made of pure gold. Inside the holy place, not even a single small vessel was an exception. Life inside the holy place is a life lived by faith even in small things. Do not pass over even the small matters to entrust to God today while lamenting that you have no faith to carry out great things. If you have faith even as small as a mustard seed, believe and ask, beginning with small things. If you lack wisdom for your work, ask for wisdom, and if you lack what you need, tell Him of that need. If it is hard to bear alone, share your circumstances with the church and with brothers and sisters of faith, and pray together.

When we see what we prayed for being answered, bold faith arises in us: "God has heard my prayer." Give thanks to God, looking back on where you got wisdom, who stood with you, and how the matter that was blocked was resolved. When you experience the help of God in this way, you come to seek

Him before the next difficulty as well. Faith does not grow only by watching the experiences of others. We entrust our own lives to God and learn of His help.

There are also problems not yet resolved. When we have asked God but the circumstances do not change immediately, we take back into our arms the matter we first entrusted and worry alone. Do not judge that God has not heard on the grounds that your heart has become stifled. When the time comes, God will resolve it, and however He handles it, it is a matter for Him to handle. If you have entrusted it to Him, entrust to Him also the time and the way He will work.

Entrust to the Lord what you cannot bear, and wait. While waiting, too, hear the word and gain strength. God supplies what is needed in due season, gives wisdom, and also helps through the church. Faith in God is different from the helplessness that does nothing. Because we believe that He works, we can continue the work entrusted to us.

Even with worries, carry out the work entrusted to you today

Distinguish between what is to be entrusted to the Lord and what we are to carry out. We cannot change a family member as we wish, but we can entrust that person to God, pray, and fulfill our own responsibility. We cannot decide everything that will happen tomorrow, but we can faithfully do the work entrusted to us today. To entrust to God does not mean that we should neither farm nor work. Because we believe, we move our hands, learn what we lack, and seek the help we need.

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Jesus does not turn away from the needs of our daily lives. Rather, with the word that the Father knows those needs, He leads us out of anxiety.

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:31–34).

He said that the Father knows what we need. So the Lord tells us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness. This is not a word telling us to think of the work of God only in the time left over after resolving all the needs of daily life. Because we believe in the Father's care, we can seek His kingdom. As faith grows, we come to seek His kingdom and His righteousness, believing that God will supply the small things.

Even a person whose heart is still heavy with his own problems can pray for other saints. Even if his circumstances are not comfortable, he can do the small service entrusted to him. It is not only the person who has resolved all his anxieties who does the work of God. The person who has entrusted to God what he cannot resolve works with the strength he has received from Him. If hands are needed for the gospel, offer your hands, and if a mouth is needed, offer your mouth. If you have asked by faith, respond by faith also to the opportunity God gives.

The heart that looked only at my own problems widens little by little in this way. The person who asked only for his own life comes to ask for the kingdom of God, for the saints, and for souls. The food of the righteous is the work of

preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit and delivering sinners from sin. The difficulty of a person who believes in the same gospel is not something to watch from the sidelines. It is something for us to bear together and pray about.

This is the life of faith lived together inside the holy place. The Lord gives us the word of life, and we believe that word and gain strength. We receive help through those who believe with us, and we, too, help others. Alone we are lonely, but when we do the work of God together in the church, we are joyful. Do not hold the burdens of daily life alone and withdraw your heart from the church, but join your heart with those who have become one through the same salvation.

Offer the bread of faith even while waiting for a resolution

We think that we can serve the Lord well only if we become people without any worries. But if everything goes smoothly with nothing holding us back, we easily fail to know how precious the gospel is and forget to pray. In the midst of difficulty, rather, we come to know how weak we are and seek God. Even a person who easily judged the difficulties of others, after going through his own problems, finally understands and seeks His help together with them. When we hold on to the gospel of the water and the Spirit as the flesh grows weak, that time becomes, rather, an occasion for the soul to grow stronger.

Tell God today of the matter that weighs most heavily on you. Worrying does not resolve that matter; God must help. Do not take into your own arms, by your own ability, even what you cannot resolve yourself. If anxiety rises again after you have entrusted it, think of the love of the Lord, who saved you,

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and entrust that matter again. And while doing so, carry out the work you must do today.

Jesus, because He loved us, had our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, received that judgment on the Cross, rose again from death, and became the eternal Savior. That Jesus is with us today as well. When He has given us such great joy, do not lay down even the joy of the salvation you received, crushed by a small anxiety not yet resolved. Though there are problems, there is grace to give thanks for, there is a Father to rely on, and there is the Church of God where we can be together.

Even without knowing all of tomorrow's circumstances, we can believe in God today. Do not put it off, saying that you will offer the bread of faith only after the problem is resolved. The showbread on the table was always before God. Today, too, when our circumstances are not all resolved, we place the bread of faith before God and live today by the strength He gives. ✉

Sermon 23 by Paul C. Jong

Prayer offered to the Lord, who washed away sin

< Exodus 30:7–10 >

“‘Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations. You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it. And Aaron shall make atonement upon its horns once a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonement; once a year he shall make atonement upon it throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.’”

Can the fact that one has prayed for a long time be evidence that one’s sins have been washed away? Because one has recalled one’s wrongs one by one and deeply repented of them, has even the judgment of those sins ended? Without a clear answer to these questions, a person becomes afraid again even after praying. He examines whether there remains a sin he has not yet confessed, and when he commits the same wrong, he wonders whether his last prayer was insufficient. Then he comes to think that he must pray longer and weep more for his heart to become clean.

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But the remission of sins does not depend on how earnest our prayers were. God did not entrust atonement to our lips. The Savior accomplished the work of removing sin, and we have become people who believe in that salvation and pray to God. If we pray zealously yet think that our prayer supplements the atonement Jesus accomplished, we are in fact not fully believing what the Savior did.

The altar of incense was the altar on which incense was burned to God inside the holy place, and to us it teaches the altar of prayer. In the word concerning this altar, the command to burn incense and the command concerning what must not be done on it appear together. God did not allow the incense to cease, yet He did not allow a burnt offering or a grain offering to be offered on it. Today, through this distinction, let us examine what we are believing and praying. It is not that we cover up our wrongs and pretend to be at peace, but that we know the One who actually removed sin and offer prayer that believes in Him.

The incense burned daily does not take the place of atonement

Aaron burned incense in the morning and burned incense in the evening as well. Just as the priest burned incense morning and evening, the saints pray to God. But the fact that incense was burned repeatedly did not make the blood of the sin offering unnecessary. At the end of the text comes the word to make atonement upon the horns of the altar of incense once a year with the blood of the sin offering. The incense offered daily and the blood of atonement were not the same thing. God

did not have the two mixed together so that anything could be offered.

Verse 9 says of this altar, *"You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering."* The burnt offering was a sacrifice God had appointed. But the place to offer the burnt offering was the altar of burnt offering in the court. If a sacrifice to be offered at the altar of burnt offering were offered on the altar of incense, it would be a thing out of place, like slaughtering an ox inside the house. We cannot do away with the distinction He appointed on the grounds that we have zeal in offering to God.

Then what, today, is the *"strange incense"* He said not to burn on the altar of incense? It is trying to remove sin by prayer, saying, "God, wash away my sins." We pray. We tell God of our shortcomings and seek His help. But the act of praying cannot become a sacrifice that pays the price of our sins. If sin could be washed away by prayer, it would mean that Jesus did not remove all sin and that prayer lends a hand. The altar of incense is not the place where sin is removed. The sacrifice asking for sin to be washed away was already finished at the altar of burnt offering.

Look at verse 10 of the text. The blood of the sin offering was put on the horns of the altar of incense only once a year. He did not say to put blood on them every day. The horns show the judgment of sin, and in verse 3 God had even those horns overlaid with pure gold. This means that the person whose judgment has ended by the blood of the sacrifice prays before that altar. Therefore, do not take the exhortation to pray daily as a command to accomplish a new atonement daily. The altar of incense teaches the grace of God, who gave us the place of prayer, and at the same time teaches that there is a separate atonement on which that prayer must rely.

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The Lord bore the price of sin that our words cannot pay

Knowing one's own sins and the price of those sins having been paid are different things. The words admitting a wrong do not receive judgment in one's place. Nor is the anguish of heart that arose because of sin evidence that the judgment of sin has been fully received. What we needed was not a way to calm our own hearts, but a Savior who would have our sins passed on to Him and be judged for us.

This is why Jesus came to this earth. Jesus is not One who only preached words showing understanding of the feelings of sinners and then departed; He is the One who actually had all our sins passed on to Him and received the judgment of those sins in our place. If Jesus had merely died on the Cross without ever having taken our sins, we could not say that His death was because of our sins. That is why we must believe in the baptism Jesus received from John.

In the Old Testament, on the Day of Atonement the high priest passed on the sins of the people once and for all by laying his hands on the offering. In the same way, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His body through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. To pay the price of that sin, He hung on the Cross and shed His blood, and received on His one body the judgment of sin we were to receive. The sacrifice of the Cross took place because there was first the baptism He received from John in order to bear our sins. And Jesus overcame the tomb and rose again, and became the living Savior, who saved us.

Here the sins of you and me are included. Just as a year's worth of sins was passed on at one time on the Day of Atonement, Jesus had the sins of our whole lifetime, which we

commit from birth until death, passed on to Him at one time. He received the judgment of all those sins on the Cross. It is the salvation Jesus accomplished before we began to pray.

We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with our hearts. The Holy Spirit dwells in the person who believes in the salvation the Son of God accomplished, and that person draws near to the Father as a born-again child of God. One does not become a child by becoming skilled at prayer. Because we became children by believing in the salvation that washed away our sins, we can pray to the Father. This prayer is a privilege given to the righteous, who have received the remission of sins once and for all by believing in the water and the blood.

Believe in the eternal sacrifice already offered

Seeing the statute of making atonement every year for the horns of the altar of incense in the Old Testament, do not think that we, too, must obtain a new atonement every year or every time we do wrong. That atonement offered once a year points to Jesus having had all sins passed on to Him once and for all through the baptism He received from John. The Book of Hebrews testifies that Christ *"was offered once to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:28).*

The Lord offered an eternal sacrifice. That sacrifice is not a sacrifice that loses its effect when it meets tomorrow's sin. Salvation does not become more complete because today's prayer went well, nor does that sacrifice become incomplete because a shameful deed comes to light tomorrow. The certainty of the remission of sins lies in the work of Christ, who had sins passed on to Him and received the judgment.

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Some people think that Jesus washed away the great sins, but that they themselves must wash away the sins they commit daily by prayers of repentance. But if one believes that way, man divides the scope of the sin of the world Jesus had passed on to Him. If sins are washed both by Jesus and by prayer, it amounts to a portion remaining for us to finish in the work the Lord fully accomplished. Throw away that thought. Believe with your hearts that the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross are the salvation for the sins of our whole lifetime.

Then what do we do when our sins come to mind as we are about to pray? Even a born-again person has such times. At that time, think immediately of that blood put on the horns of the altar of incense. Each time you pray, first confirm the fact that Jesus received baptism from John for your sins, died on the Cross, rose again from death, and saved you. It is not removing sin by prayer, but confirming by faith, while praying, what the Lord has already removed.

Saying that prayer does not supplement atonement does not mean that prayer is useless. Rather, because the remission of sins has been completed, we can pray. Verse 10 says this altar is *"most holy to the LORD."* The person who can pray before this holy altar is a person without sin. Because the problem of sin that blocked us from God has been resolved, we can ask for the grace we need. The assurance of the remission of sins does not close the lips of prayer, but opens them with thanksgiving and supplication.

Even when confessing wrongs, we must believe in the Savior

Then does the person who believes in the remission of sins not need to tell God of his wrongs? One's own wickedness must be honestly admitted. To say that there was no wrong at all when one has committed a wrong is not faith. Asking whether our conduct was right and asking whether Jesus had that sin passed on to Him are different questions. We can admit the wrong of our conduct and still believe in the complete atonement of the Savior.

When praying, we can say, "I am lacking. I quarreled with someone, and I committed this sin." But do not end the sentence there. Put a comma there and go on to say, "But Lord, did You not already bear all these sins and receive judgment for me? Thank You." Do not end your prayer after merely repeating your own wickedness, but with those same lips that admit sin, give thanks to the Savior. This is not an attitude that regards one's wrongs lightly, but faith that regards the sacrifice of the Lord as true.

Saying that we are the righteous who have received the remission of sins is not a boast that there is no blemish in our conduct either. It is the confession of faith that the Lord had our sins passed on to Him and that the judgment of those sins has ended. We do not call ourselves righteous on the basis of our conduct, but on the basis of the salvation Jesus accomplished. Therefore, there is no reason to deny even the fact that we are children of God each time the weakness of the flesh comes to light. Rather, tell the Father of that weakness and ask for the faith and strength to live according to the word.

The prayer God wants does not lie in reciting a set sentence exactly. Even while saying the same words of thanks, in one's

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heart one may still think that one's own prayer removes sin. But in the prayer of the person who has received the remission of sins there is an order that comes from faith. First there is the assurance that the Lord has removed all sins, next there is thanksgiving for that grace, and after that one asks God for what is needed. Instead of a prayer asking for sin to be washed away, asking for what is needed for the righteousness of God is right prayer.

Preach salvation to the person who tries to wash away sin by prayer

Around us there are people who pray zealously to God yet are in anguish, not having obtained the remission of sins. Do not merely tell such a person to try praying more. Do not end by praising how devotedly he prays. Ask him how he prays. And let him know the meaning of the word not to offer a burnt offering or a grain offering on the altar of incense. What that person must believe in is not the sincerity of his own prayer, but the Savior, who had his sins passed on to Him and was judged.

There is no need to strive to explain a great deal of knowledge all at one time. Speak one part at a time. First, make clear what prayer is and whether sin is removed by prayer. Then, asking together what he believes and how sin is removed, lead him to the gospel of the altar of burnt offering. It is preaching why Jesus received baptism from John and why He shed His blood and died on the Cross. It is not to defeat the other person, but, as one throws a rope to a drowning person and pulls him out, to help him escape the fear of his own sins and believe in true salvation.

No longer bear the heavy burden that your prayer must accomplish atonement. Do not try to resolve again with your own tears the sins Jesus already had passed on to Him. Believe in the Lord, who had our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again from death. We who believe in the eternal remission of sins He accomplished can pray to God with thanksgiving. Each time you pray, first confirm the atonement the Lord accomplished and give thanks, and then ask the Father for the grace you need today. ✉

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Sermon 24 by Paul C. Jong

Let us take on prayer for the gospel together

< Exodus 30:6–8 >

"And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations."

It is possible to be busy serving the gospel and yet not actually pray for the gospel. Since much work has been entrusted to us and the labor to be done is clear, we move diligently. But as time passes, we become absorbed in the work, the work becomes the center, and our hearts may fall away from preaching the gospel. At first we wanted one soul to be saved, but before we know it, whether the work has been finished becomes our greater concern. The hands keep moving, but the heart may grow distant from the will of God.

Looking at the text, Aaron burned incense in the morning when he tended the lamps, and also burned incense in the evening when he lit the lamps. The service of the holy place and the burning of incense were at the same time. In the work for the gospel, too, the first is faith and the second is prayer. It is praying and working, asking by faith and working. We who

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have received the remission of sins must also ask God in the midst of working for the gospel. Labor that does not seek the help of God makes us forget whom we serve and what we rely on.

Are you telling God, in your own prayers, the needs of the person who serves the gospel together with you? Knowing that he is worn out, and knowing also that the way to preach the gospel is blocked, do you not simply feel sorry and leave it at that? We have received the remission of sins from the same Lord and draw near to the same Father. Let us not stop at looking at the labor of another person, but seek the help of God for him.

When we pray, we take hold again of the purpose of our service

The altar of incense was placed so as to face the mercy seat, where God said He would meet with us. The reason a person who has received the remission of sins draws near before the altar of incense is that, besides the grace of having received the remission of sins, he can live only by being clothed with grace every day. It is not that everything is over once we are saved; from then on, a life of receiving grace upon grace begins.

When we ask for that grace, see where our hearts are directed. As we work for the gospel, we see the material things, people, and time that are needed. These are actually needed. But if our hearts are captivated only by providing them, we forget why we were trying to provide them. The Lord said, *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. Prayer that asks for the kingdom of God to widen and for the righteousness of God to be preached is

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different from prayer for one's own flesh. Such prayer is in itself a work of serving God.

Even when the church prays for material things, it must be clear in our hearts what we intend to do with those material things. Think whether it is in order to preach the word to those who have not heard the gospel, or to help the workers serving the gospel to continue the labor entrusted to them. When we pray for a right work, we, too, come to be used for that righteous work. While we pray to God, our desires, too, come to stand rightly toward the righteousness of God.

Therefore, in prayer for the gospel there is also supplication for our own hearts. Ask that our hearts be set solely on the preaching of the gospel. Ask that the heart that tries to follow the world and the heart that is not right be cut off. If the heart of the one who works departs from the gospel, he cannot rejoice even if the work increases. Ask that God hold our hearts and help our labor serve the salvation of souls.

By the same salvation we call God Father

Do not think of praying for others as only the portion of especially excellent people. The qualification to draw near to God does not arise from human excellence. Nor was it given because one speaks well or has believed for many years. Because Jesus saved us from sin, we can draw near to God. The person entrusted with the work of serving the gospel and the person who prays for him rely on the same salvation.

We were originally people who had to be judged for our own sins. We could not become good by ourselves and stand before the holy God. To save such people as us, God came to this earth as the Savior. Jesus, who came clothed in the body of

a man, received baptism from John at the Jordan River, and through that baptism He had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him. And bearing that sin, He hung on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we had to receive. Jesus, who rose again on the third day after He died, is alive now and has become our God. In us, who have received the remission of all sins by believing in this gospel with our hearts, the Holy Spirit dwells, and we live as children of God.

That is why we call God Father. God made us, and He became our Savior. Just as a child can ask his parents for what he needs, the person who has received the remission of sins offers prayers asking the Father for help at any time. Whether one has served long or has only now believed in the gospel, the basis for drawing near to the Father is the same. Even if his words of prayer are clumsy, the person who believes in the remission of sins Jesus gave can ask the Father.

When we pray together with this faith, the needs of other saints cannot be matters that have nothing to do with me. It is because they are the affairs of children of the same Father, of people who believe in and serve the same gospel. Do not stop at repeating the story that someone has no strength, but ask God to give him faith and add strength to him. If someone says he is having difficulty preaching the gospel, before evaluating that person's ability, ask God to open the way. If someone seems to be struggling spiritually, help one another and hold one another up.

Tell God concretely what souls and workers need

Prayer for the gospel does not end with words vaguely hoping that everything will go well. The altar of incense had

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poles, so it could be moved. Just as the altar of incense went along wherever Israel moved camp, so that the incense before God did not cease, we, too, bring that matter before God wherever there is a need. Hold in your hearts who must hear the gospel and what the one who preaches the word needs.

Ask that the person who does not yet know the remission of sins may believe in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross as his own salvation. Pray that he may be made to feel thirst for the truth of this gospel, and that those who seek may meet this word. If there is a soul to whom you have preached the gospel, ask God to open the door of that person's heart. We cannot force a person's heart to believe. So we entrust that soul to God and make supplication.

For a worker who preaches the gospel, you can tell God concretely of the work entrusted to him. If his body is worn out, ask that He make him strong; if his heart has grown weak, ask that He give him faith that believes the word. Pray that God protect and hold up His servants, that they receive the material things and help they need, and that they serve with hearts joined to those who labor with them. Tell God of his daily life and health as well. God is the Father who knows the circumstances of His saved children.

Let the person unaccustomed to prayer listen to what the church asks for. Even a person young in faith learns what true prayer is when he is together with the church. It is because those who have gone before pray for the righteousness of God. Just as a child imitates the prayers of adults and then makes them his own, at first one follows the prayers of those who have gone before, and later one asks the Father from one's own heart. When prayer does not come easily, call, "Lord, Lord," and meditate in your heart. As you keep calling on the Lord, the things to ask for gradually increase.

The one who prays also serves that work together

There are people who stand back on the grounds that they themselves cannot do much work directly. They consider that they are old and their bodies are infirm, and that they have neither the strength to go far nor great material means. But it is not for lack of material means that one cannot serve. Do not regard as small the qualification for prayer that God has given. You who have received the remission of sins from the Lord can, by prayer, serve God, serve the church, and serve the servants of God and the souls who will hear the gospel.

Think of the poles of the altar of incense. It was a small altar, one cubit wide, so one person could have lifted it, but the poles were put through it and two people carried it on both sides to move it. Not a single article of the holy place was carelessly loaded onto something and carried; they served by carrying them on their own shoulders. This shows the prayer of unity we offer together before God. And it teaches that prayer, too, is a work of serving God. The word is service, the preaching of the gospel is service, and prayer is also service.

Praying is different from watching from afar what others do and hoping it goes well. It is holding that need in one's own heart and bringing it before God. Those who go ahead and work are often bound by the work and cannot do all the praying that should be done. The saints who pray carry that portion together with them. Even if the role visible to human eyes is not great, one takes part in that work through the prayer God hears.

Conversely, let the person who works busily not leave prayer entirely to others either. The more a person knows the work, the more concretely he can tell God what is lacking and what help is needed. When you gather, pray together even for a

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short while, and work after praying. Those who have asked together in this way rejoice together in that work when God gives strength to the worker and opens the way to preach the gospel.

Continue your service with the faith that God hears

If you have asked God, have the faith that He hears. The One we ask is the living God the Father. The mercy seat before the altar of incense is the place God called *"where I will meet with you."* The prayer offered in that place does not scatter into the empty air. Just as God receives the incense when it rises, God hears the prayer offered by faith and shows by His answer that He is our God.

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14–15).

The reason we ask boldly is not that we have the power to push through our own will, but that we believe the promise that if we ask according to the will of God, He hears. God delights in the gospel being preached, people obtaining the remission of sins, and believers carrying out the work of the Lord. Therefore, when you ask for that work, do not hesitate. If we lack many things, bring exactly that lack and draw near to the Father.

Verse 8 says this incense is to be *"perpetual"* throughout the generations. If we say, "Since I believe God is my God, He will give even if I do not pray," the altar of incense ends up an article that need not exist. In the morning say, "Help me as I live through this day as well," and in the evening tell Him,

"Today I did this well and did that wrong. About this matter my heart is still not at ease." Even while washing the dishes, if a worrying matter comes to mind, ask right there, "Lord, help me. Help the church." Even if you do not know how, keep praying. Having prayed, do not be impatient, asking why it is not fulfilled right away, but if it is a prayer that accords with the will of God, believe that He will answer in due season, and wait.

While waiting, we do not sit idle. Because we believe, we prepare, and because we believe, we work. If you have prayed for the difficulty of a worker, look after his labor, and if you have prayed for a soul, hold precious the opportunity to preach the gospel to him. The faith that God helps leads our hands and feet, too, into service.

Now, do not leave the needs we must ask for together as someone else's business. Tell God, in your own prayers, of the souls the church holds in its heart, the workers who preach the gospel, and the help needed to carry out that work. Jesus, who saved us from sin, has made it possible for us to call God Father. We who have received this grace are not people who will live only for our own circumstances. In that place where the Father meets with us, let us all together take on prayer for the gospel. ✉

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Sermon 25 by Paul C. Jong

Faith that draws near to God, not asserting my righteousness

< Exodus 25:21–22 >

“You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”

There is a heart that wants to draw near to God yet keeps stepping back. It is the heart that says that since I am too lacking now, I will draw near after I have improved a little more. When we see ourselves having repeated wrongs, it is easy to think that way. Even when we sit in worship and hear the word, the doubt remains whether God would be pleased with a person like me. We speak of faith before people, yet before God we cannot lift our faces.

Then when can we draw near to God? Must the day come when we can no longer find a blemish in our lives? If we wait like that, the day to draw near to God does not come for us. While we try to find the basis of salvation in ourselves, we step back again each time we discover a shortcoming. So today, rather than asking how much more I must be corrected, let us hear from the word on what basis God meets with us.

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God commanded Moses to put the Testimony in the ark and to put the mercy seat on top of the ark. The mercy seat is the lid that covers the ark of the Testimony. As its name says, it is the place where sins are remitted, and the place where God meets with His people. God said He would meet precisely there. In appointing the place where He would meet, He did not tell people first to produce and show a perfect life; He gave the mercy seat, where He would grant the remission of sins. So let us stop looking for ways to defend ourselves, and learn from this word the faith that relies on the salvation God has prepared.

Before the word of God, my excuses cannot protect me

When a wrong is exposed before people, we look for words to explain. We say there were circumstances that left us no choice, and we sometimes consider that, compared with the person beside us, my wrong is on the small side. But in drawing near to God, such comparison has no power at all. It is because the law God gave is a law that applies equally to everyone.

On the Testimony He had them place inside the ark of the Testimony, the commandments of God are written. He called those tablets *"the Testimony"* because the One who gave these commandments is God, and God Himself is the witness of that word. So it is not a word from which one can pick out and keep only the parts that are comfortable to accept. The heart that loved something else more than God, and the conduct that hated people and followed one's own desires, are exposed before this word. A sin others do not know is still sin before God.

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The apostle Paul made clear the role of the law.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

If, after realizing my sin through the law, I again try to be accepted by God holding up a record of having kept that law well, I have missed what the law taught. The person who acknowledges that the law is right also acknowledges the fact that he has not lived according to that word. According to this law, we are all people who must die. Only when we come to know ourselves as those who must receive the judgment of sin does it become clear why atonement is necessary.

When we see before the commandments of God that we have not lived according to that word, our hearts tremble. That trembling is the heart that a person who truly believes the word has. So do not try to hide the sin that has come to light, but admit it as it is before the word. Admitting it does not newly create a sin that was not there. It only makes us see rightly the sin that already is. While we hide our sin and regard ourselves as fine people, why the Lord had to sacrifice Himself for me does not reach our hearts. Laying down my righteousness before the word is admitting one's own true state so that one can receive the salvation God gives.

That the law stops our mouths does not mean that the way of salvation is blocked as well. In today's text the Testimony is inside the ark, and on top of that ark the mercy seat is placed. God, who exposes sin, placed on top of it the place where He would remit sin. So do not stop in despair at the fact that your wrong is clear, but hear how God removed that sin.

What God receives is the sacrifice in place of sin

When we hear the word that God loves us, it is easy to think that He will simply cover over the judgment of sin. But under the mercy seat the Testimony is still there. God does not withdraw that law; He judges sin as sin, yet receives its price from the sacrificial offering. It is not that He says sin is not there when it is, but that He passes sin on to the offering and actually removes it. Here the justice and the love of God are together.

See what the high priest takes in with him on the Day of Atonement. It is neither a record of how many tears the people have shed, nor a promise to live well from then on. It is the blood of the sacrifice God appointed. God commanded Aaron in this way concerning the sin offering for the people.

"Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness" (Leviticus 16:15–16).

That blood was sprinkled *"because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins" (Leviticus 16:16)*. The blood sprinkled on and before the mercy seat shows that there was a sacrifice that paid the price of sin with life. By that blood, shed within the sacrifice God appointed, the sins of the people were atoned for.

Here, too, lies the reason the laying on of hands and blood are always together in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. In

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Leviticus chapter 1, the person presenting the offering puts his hand on the head of the burnt offering and kills that offering, and the priests sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. By the laying on of hands sin is passed on to the offering, and that offering dies in place of the sinner. If the person who committed sin had to give up his own life, there could be no joy of salvation for him. God gave an offering to be sacrificed in his place in order to make him live.

Here lies the basis on which we meet God. We draw near not because my resolution is firm, but because there is a sacrifice God receives for sinners. Resolution and regret are things I do, but the way of atonement is what God prepared. Before trying to produce something more within your heart, look to the offering God has prepared for you.

In the text God said He would speak *"from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony" (Exodus 25:22)*. Those cherubim were made so that they would be *"covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat" (Exodus 25:20)*. Beneath their faces, inside the ark, is the Testimony, and on the mercy seat the blood of the sacrifice is sprinkled. God sees two things together there: whether one admits before the word that he is a sinner, and whether he believes in the blood of the sacrifice God receives. The person God meets at the mercy seat is the person who holds on to these two together.

The One this offering points to is Jesus Christ. The Lord, who is God, came in the body of a man and became our sacrificial offering. It is not that we made and gave God the offering He would receive. God, who had prepared the offering without blemish in the Old Testament, gave His own Son when the time came. From the beginning of salvation, we are the

ones who receive. Now lay down the heart that agonized over what to put forward before God, and believe what the Lord has given.

We believe in both the transfer of my sin to Jesus and the judgment of the Cross

To know that the blood of the mercy seat is for me, we must first know who received my sin. Jesus is One without sin. Then why did He have to die on the Cross? It is because He bore our sins. The event that joins Jesus, who has no sin, and me, who have many sins, is the baptism Jesus received from John.

When Jesus came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River, John tried to prevent Him, saying that he, rather, needed to be baptized by Jesus. Then Jesus spoke.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15).

What the Lord did, saying, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* was precisely this baptism He received from John. Just as in the Old Testament sins were passed on by laying hands on the head of the offering, all the sin of the world was transferred to Jesus through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, who represents mankind. This baptism, which the One without sin received from John, cannot be a rite of washing away His own sins. It is the event in which He received our sin into His own body in order to save sinners.

And on the Cross He received the judgment of those sins. Because Jesus hung there bearing the sin of the world, the

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blood He shed is the blood of sacrifice for us. Through the baptism He received from John the Lord received my sin, and by the death of the Cross He paid the price of my sins. What the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat pointed to is precisely the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. Jesus rose again from death and became our living Savior.

Here, do not set your sins apart by themselves. Within the sin of the world that was passed on to Jesus are the sins of your whole life. The sins already exposed, the sins I have not yet realized, and the sins I will commit as I live in the future are all within it. Jesus had all those sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and received all their judgment on the Cross. So the scope of salvation is not as much as the sins I have remembered and confessed, but as much as the Lord, who knows all our sins, has accomplished.

Believing this fact with the heart is the faith that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If you say you know Jesus yet still hold your sins as a portion to resolve by yourself, hear again what the Lord did. The Lord did not come to make sin a little lighter. He came to have sin passed on to Him and to end its judgment. The person who believes in this salvation actually has no sin. God sees that and makes him righteous and His child. The Holy Spirit dwells in that person who has received the remission of sins.

Do not linger in examining whether your heart is now in a mood fit to be saved. Feeling is not faith. Faith is accepting what Jesus actually did as one's own salvation. On a day when the heart is greatly moved, the basis of salvation is the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, and on a day when there is little emotion, that fact remains the same. Do

not measure the sacrifice of the Lord, which God received, by the degree to which you feel it.

Do not wait for a better self, but rely on the accomplished atonement

Even after receiving the remission of sins, as we live we do wrong to one another and the shortcomings of the flesh come to light. At that time we admit two things together: the fact that I did wrong, and the fact that the Lord has already borne even that sin. Neither hiding the wrong, nor turning the salvation the Lord accomplished back into something unfinished each time a wrong comes to light, is honest faith. We became righteous not because my deeds are perfect, but by believing in the perfect atonement of the Lord.

Admit and correct your wrongs. If you have wronged a person, say to that person, too, that you are sorry. But do not make that the price of atonement that makes God accept you. If a person tries to repay the price of sin by his own deeds, however hard he strives, there is no end. It is because he tries to resolve again by himself the sin the Lord has already borne.

Instead, take the wrong that has come to light and draw near before the atonement of the Lord. It is confirming again by faith that this wrong of today, too, is within the sin of the world Jesus had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and that its judgment, too, has already ended on the Cross. Do not merely recite from memory the remission of sins you received once, but hold on today again to the atonement already accomplished.

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The Book of Hebrews testifies of how complete the atonement Christ accomplished is.

"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).

If it is eternal atonement, there is no reason to demand a sacrifice again of the Lord because of my shortcomings exposed today. The Lord, who bore our sins, need not receive baptism from John again or hang on the Cross again. The salvation He accomplished once and for all is my salvation even now. That salvation I relied on when I began the life of faith before the Lord is sufficient today as well, when I have discovered my weakness.

The heart that relies on the Lord and the heart that asserts itself have different bases for drawing near to God. The person who asserts himself is confident on the days he does well and has nowhere to go on the days he does wrong. But the person who relies on Jesus does not boast of his own merit on the days he does well, nor does he deny the atonement of the Lord on the days he does wrong. Knowing that he has nothing to boast of in himself, he can still draw near to God. This is the boldness of the person who believes in grace.

God gave the mercy seat in order to remit sin and meet with us. Having heard this word, how long will you wait only for yourself to improve? Where would you find a better basis than the sacrifice of Jesus? Admit your sins exposed before the word, and believe that Jesus had those sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received their judgment on the Cross. The Lord, who rose again from death, is your Savior.

There is no righteousness of mine to put forward before God. But there is the sacrifice of the Lord, which God received.

Lay down the reassurance gained from the thought that you have become a fine person, and be reassured by the word that the Lord has removed all your sins. Even now God meets, from between the two cherubim above the mercy seat, the person who comes forward with this faith. Therefore, today, too, when we have discovered our shortcomings, we draw near to God relying on the sacrifice of the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 26 by Paul C. Jong

Take on the gospel through which God met us, and cherish and serve it

< Exodus 25:12–22 >

"You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you. You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the

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Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel."

When God had the ark of the Testimony made, He commanded even the poles to be used when moving it. He had rings of gold attached to the four feet of the ark, and had poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold put through those rings so that the ark could be carried. And He said to leave the poles as they were and not take them out. It was not an article that, having been made carefully according to the word when it was made, could then be handled in whatever way was convenient when it was moved. It was because the mercy seat, where God would meet and speak, was on that ark.

This command makes us, who have been saved, look back on the heart with which we must serve the word of God. On the ark carried about on its poles was the mercy seat, which removes the sins of sinners and makes them righteous. What God told us to serve is precisely that word of salvation. Having received that gospel does not mean that we may now handle it as we please. The word of salvation that brought me to meet God is the word others, too, need just as it is.

We heard the gospel and received the remission of sins. Then what is it that we are now entrusted with? We are people who know how God makes sinners righteous, and people who have become able to preach what the Lord accomplished to those who do not yet know this salvation. Today let us examine together how preciously we regard the salvation we received, and with what content and what heart we are to serve it.

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The word that saved us cannot be changed as we please

Let us read chapter 25, verse 15 again.

"The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it."

The word not to take out the poles put through the ark is a command to keep at all times the method of carrying that God appointed. Just as those who made the ark followed the pattern God had shown for its materials and shape, those who moved it also had to follow the method God appointed. Being entrusted with a holy article did not mean having gained the right to handle it according to one's own will.

Even in the days of David, who served God well, there was a time when this command was forgotten. People *"set the ark of God on a new cart" (2 Samuel 6:3)* and were moving it when they experienced Uzzah dying beside the ark. Only after that *"the children of the Levites bore the ark of God on their shoulders, by its poles" (1 Chronicles 15:15)*. The command of God does not change because a method that seems more convenient to people comes to mind.

From this word we learn the place of the person who has received the gospel. That it is the word by which I was saved does not make me the master of that word. The One who accomplished salvation is the Lord, and we had no ability to remove sin. The Lord bore our sins and received their judgment, and we heard and believed that fact and received the remission of sins. Therefore, the content we are to preach is also exactly what the Lord did.

But when we become accustomed to the gospel, it is easy to take the precious word for granted. We think that with the short saying, 'If you believe in Jesus, you have no sin,' the other

person will also understand all the salvation I know. There are times when we skip over the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John as though that person would know it, and only tell him that he has no sin without saying how the Lord had those sins passed on to Him. The person who hears those words may rejoice for a moment. But if he does not know on account of what his sins were removed, he does not get an answer when he discovers his sins again.

Do not think that we have fulfilled our responsibility by offering words that make a person's heart comfortable for a moment. What we received is the news of salvation that actually removed sin. Skipping over the baptism Jesus received from John, and leaving out the blood of the Cross, are like taking out the poles God said to keep in place. Preach so that the listener can believe by connecting his own sins with what the Lord did. Not deciding the content of salvation myself, but holding up and preaching it exactly as the Lord did it, is the attitude of serving the word.

When you preach the blood of the mercy seat, do not leave out the baptism Jesus received from John

The mercy seat is a beautiful lid made of pure gold, but its preciousness does not lie in the gold. It is because it is the place where the high priest went inside the veil once a year with the blood of the sacrificial offering and sprinkled it, the place where God grants the remission of sins. Therefore, to preach God, who meets us at the mercy seat, we must preach the blood sprinkled on it, that is, the sacrifice that removed sin.

The One to whom that blood points is Jesus Christ. Jesus had the sin of the world transferred onto Him through the

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baptism He received from John, and hung on the Cross and received the judgment of that sin. Just as the blue thread and the scarlet thread of the door of the tabernacle were woven together in one piece, these two things cannot be preached separately. So when you preach the Cross of the Lord, make clear, along with it, that He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John.

Look at the word in which Jesus receives baptism from John.

"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).

Though John tried to prevent Him, Jesus went to John the Baptist and received baptism. It was because the work, *"To fulfill all righteousness,"* depended on it. Through that baptism He received from John, who represented mankind, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him, and bearing that sin, He received our judgment in our place on the Cross. The gospel of the water and the Spirit preaches these two things together.

Do not stop after only telling the fact that Jesus received baptism from John. Let the listener know what relation that event has to his sins. At that time Jesus had even that person's sins passed on to Him, and the blood of the Cross is the sacrifice by which He received the judgment of those sins. When he knows this, that person does not hear the work of Jesus as someone else's story, but comes to believe it as his own salvation.

Nor let anyone put forward the rite we received or the resolution you made as the evidence of salvation. What

removed our sins is the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross.

When you preach salvation, do not reduce the scope of the sins the Lord bore either. If you teach that only the sins before first believing disappeared and the sins after that must be washed away by one's own efforts, you bind the listener again to his own deeds. The Lord bore even the sins that person has not yet committed. To say this is not to regard sin lightly, but to preach fully the sacrifice the Lord paid because of our sins.

Preach, along with it, who it is that meets with us

To preach the gospel as it is does not end with reciting and preaching only the order of the events that happened. It is also preaching who it is that did those things. Jesus is not merely an excellent man who showed an example of love. The One who came to save us is God. Our Creator became a man and became the Savior of sinners.

Think of the divinity and kingship of Jesus, which the purple thread of the tabernacle points to. The King of kings, God who made the universe, left the throne of heavenly glory, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man, and died bearing our sins. When we believe this fact, we do not see the Cross merely as a pitiable death, but believe it as the life that the One who made us gave up in order to make us live. We come to know how much the Lord loved sinners and how certain that salvation is.

And Jesus rose again from death. He, who bore our sins and was judged, is our Savior, living even now. So our drawing near to God is not commemorating the sacrifice of one man

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long ago, but believing in and following the living Lord. He gives eternal life to those who believe.

The apostle John speaks of the witness of the water, the blood, and the Spirit together.

"This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and the three agree in one –ASV" (1 John 5:6–8).

Just as *"the three agree in one,"* do not separate who Jesus is from what He did. Jesus, who is God, came as a man, had our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. By believing in this Lord, who rose again from death, we received the remission of sins and eternal life. The witnesses of the New Testament did not divide these three but believed them as one. The Spirit testifies that this salvation is indeed the truth, and dwells in the person who believes.

What we are to preach is not the vague help of a deity or peace of mind, but Jesus Christ, who removed sin. Making people believe in Him as the Savior is preaching the gospel. So do not cut away what Jesus did or change it into more familiar religious expressions in order to draw people's interest. Preaching the content of salvation as it is, is not because of the stubbornness of the one who speaks. It is because only with that content can the listener, too, believe in the remission of sins God gave and meet God.

If the salvation we received is precious, we become faithful to the listener as well

In the text God met Moses at the mercy seat and said there that He would speak *"about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel" (Exodus 25:22)*. The word He would give from above the mercy seat was not for Moses alone, but a word for the children of Israel. Today we, too, cannot be satisfied with knowing by myself alone the word of salvation by which God met us. It is because when we preach this salvation as it is, even a person who has not yet met the Lord comes to meet God.

The person who truly holds precious the fact that God has remitted my sins comes to think about what the person suffering over the same problem of sin needs. More than the emotion I felt when I rejoiced or the long record of my faith, what is needed is to let him know from the word the fact that Jesus removed his sins, too, through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. Do not set your heart on displaying yourself, the speaker, but reveal the Lord, in whom he must believe.

To preach as we received means to preach the content as it is. The place where each person is blocked differs. Some cannot admit their sins, some know their sins but do not know how to wash them away, and some believe in Jesus yet do not know the meaning of the baptism He received from John. Listen to why that person is holding sin in his heart. And examine the Bible together and let him know clearly the content he needs. Though the words that explain it to suit that person differ, the content of the salvation the Lord accomplished is not lessened or changed in the least.

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Such service takes time and labor. Just as He had the ark put on poles and carried on human shoulders, the work of serving the gospel is also a work done respectfully, giving body and heart to it. It is easy to think that having spoken once, I have done my part, but look back on whether the other person understood what you preached. Words familiar to me, such as "laying on of hands" or "the baptism He received from John," may be words he is hearing for the first time. Explain faithfully the meaning of the words that sin was passed on and that He received the judgment of that sin in our place. The heart that holds the gospel precious also shows itself in laboring so that the other person comes to know that precious content.

What washes away a person's sins is not our eloquence. So there is no reason to keep the gospel hidden because our eloquence is lacking. We have only to preach, together with the Bible, the word by which I believed and received the remission of sins. The Lord accomplished salvation, and we preach that salvation.

Even being entrusted with this gospel is grace

Some people are satisfied only with the fact that they themselves have already received the remission of sins, and regard preaching the word of salvation to others as something far from them. But think of how you yourself came to hear that word. Someone preached to us the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John and of the Cross, which we had not known. We heard that word and believed that the Lord had my sins passed on to Him and received all their judgment as well. Now the same word of salvation is needed by others too.

There are people who have believed in Jesus for a long time but still have sin in their hearts, and people who think their sins are too great and have given up drawing near to God. What they need is not our boasting that we have been saved. It is a word that lets them know how God removed their sins. If I treasure the gospel that was preached to me, I cannot pass by a person who needs that gospel.

He did not tell us to carry out this work all alone. God had the poles put through the rings on both sides of the ark so that it would be carried together from both sides. Learn the word and serve together within the church that believes in the same gospel. If you are still clumsy at explaining, learn more, and examine together the word the other person asks about. There is no need to speak as though you know what you do not know. With a heart that wants the word of the Lord to be preached rightly rather than a heart that boasts of its own ability, unite in purpose with those who have the same faith and preach it completely.

It is not that the remission of sins is maintained only when we serve like this. God saved us without any condition before we did anything, and the Lord had already borne all our sins before we served. Because we believed in that salvation and became children of God, we can now serve the gospel. Service is not adding to an insufficient atonement; it is the preaching of that grace to others by a person who has received the complete atonement. If the order is reversed, service becomes a fearful debt, but when we know grace, the very fact that He entrusted it to us becomes thanksgiving.

Not just anyone could carry the ark of God. When David moved the ark again, he had only the Levites carry it, saying, *"The LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever" (1 Chronicles 15:2)*. Today, too,

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the person who does not believe in the truth of the remission of sins cannot preach this gospel. Yet the Lord washed us, who, pressed down by sin, could not save even ourselves, and chose us as people who preach the word by which other souls are saved. How precious a grace this is!

Now make clear again in your own heart the gospel you received. Believe in both the baptism Jesus received from John and the judgment He received on the Cross, and confess the Lord, who rose again from death, as your own Savior. And preach that salvation just as you received it. Serve with all your heart so that the person who has not yet met the Lord may believe in the same remission of sins you received.

We cannot regard lightly this gospel by which God met us. I give thanks to the Lord, who made it possible for me to take on the word that made me live and preach it to others. Being saved is in itself already a great grace, yet He has even made us serve the work of that salvation. With a heart that knows this grace, let us respectfully serve the gospel entrusted to us, as the ark was carried with the poles put through it. ✉

Sermon 27 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord, who bore even the sins of us who serve

< Exodus 28:36–38 >

“You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. So it shall be on Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.”

There are times when we come back from doing the work of God and our hearts are heavy. It is because, more than the work we labored at, we think of the self that was exposed while doing that work. Speaking hastily to a fellow worker, feeling hurt that others did not acknowledge us, the heart that, even while preaching the gospel, hoped for its own words to be recognized—all these come to light. We said we were serving God, yet even in that my own desires were mixed in. When we discover such a self, with what shall we draw near to God again?

We may think that next time we will work more and repay today’s wrong. Or we may step back, saying that a person like me cannot do the work of God. But the way our sins are removed lies neither in more service nor in quitting service.

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When the people came out to offer holy things, God established a high priest to bear their sin, and had a plate of gold engraved *"HOLINESS TO THE LORD"* attached to his forehead. Today, in this word, we see Jesus Christ, who bore even the sins of us who serve God.

Even in what is offered as holy there is the problem of sin

Let us read Exodus 28:38 again.

"So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD."

The people of Israel came out before God with holy things in order to receive the remission of sins. But God did not leave the receiving of those holy things to the devotion of the one who offered them. He had Aaron, with the plate of gold on his forehead, bear *"the iniquity of the holy things,"* and said that in that way He would receive those holy things. Even for the person who came out to offer what is holy, the problem of sin remained as it was, and the one who resolved that problem was not the person offering but the high priest God had established.

We who serve God today also look again at our own service before this word. Spending time and laboring with our bodies for the gospel is a precious thing. But we cannot present that labor as merit that erases our sins. Does pride disappear from the heart because we have done much work? Do envy and greed vanish because we have helped others? Rather, the more we serve, the more deeply it comes to light that I, before anyone else, am lacking before God.

If we do not know this, the more our service increases, the more our boasting increases. We remember what we have done and put others down, and we put it forward before God as well. Then, when our own ugly self is exposed, we are discouraged as though we had lost everything. Whether boasting or discouraged, we are looking for the basis on which to stand before God in our own deeds. On what are you leaning now as you stand before God?

God did not pass over sin as a trifle; He set up the office of the high priest, who takes on that sin. The people found reassurance not in the preciousness of what they had brought, but in the high priest God had established. We who believe in the gospel today also do the work of priests before God. But the High Priest is Jesus Christ, and we are priests who serve relying on Him. Do not look only at your own serving hands, but look to the High Priest, who bore our sins.

Our holiness comes from the Lord having borne our sins

On the plate of gold attached to Aaron's forehead the words *"HOLINESS TO THE LORD"* were engraved. To be holy before God is to be without sin. That plate of gold was fastened firmly to the front of the turban with a blue cord and did not fall off, and because it was on the front of the turban, it was the first thing to catch the eye of anyone who looked at the high priest. And God had it always be on Aaron's forehead. The holiness of being without sin was not the plate of gold alone. It was together with the blue cord that fastened that plate.

The blue cord points to the baptism Jesus received from John. How can we become holy people without sin before God?

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It is because of the baptism Jesus received from John when He came to this earth. Jesus is not One who merely commanded us sinners from afar to try to become clean by ourselves. The Lord, who is God, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man and Himself accomplished the work of saving sinners.

God the Father wanted the Son to have the sin of all mankind passed on to Him through the baptism He would receive from John, and Jesus, according to that will, went to the Jordan River and received baptism from John. That work was the same as the sacrificial offering in the Old Testament receiving the laying on of hands and having sins passed on to it. Jesus had the sin of the world transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, and within that sin of the world are the sins of you and me as well.

Because He had sins passed on to Him, Jesus could be nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and die. He received in our place the judgment of the sins that had been passed on to Him. And He rose again from death and became the High Priest in heaven. The person who believes with his heart in this right thing God has done has all his sins washed away. God makes him His child and gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Then are the sins exposed while serving God also included in the sins Jesus had passed on to Him? They are. The hasty words to a fellow worker and the heart that wanted to be recognized are also sins we commit as we live each day. Those sins, too, Jesus already had transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John. The thought that only the sins committed while serving must be repaid by devotion is a thought that diminishes what the Lord did.

So the word *"always"* in verse 38 is precious. The plate of gold was always on Aaron's forehead. There was no day when the high priest went before God leaving that turban off. The

judgment of the Cross ended once and for all, but the fact that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John we keep in our hearts and acknowledge every day. That is the faith of holiness. It is not a faith that insists there was no wrong, but a faith that confesses every day that the Lord bore and washed away even my sins, the sins of one who did wrong.

Admitting sin and denying salvation are different things

Some people think that to admit their wrongs deeply they must say that they have become sinners again. But that a wrong has come to light in a person who has received the remission of sins and that the salvation Jesus accomplished has collapsed are not the same statement. Human deeds are always lacking, but the salvation of God is perfect. Even while admitting the wrong done today, we can believe the word that the Lord had even that sin passed on to Him. That is the confession of the righteous who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The Book of Hebrews makes clear what kind of High Priest ours is.

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:26–27).

Jesus is different from the earthly high priests, who first had to offer sacrifices for their own sins. The One who is holy and without evil offered Himself once for all for us. It is not that He

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completes salvation after first correcting our condition; He bore our sins on His own sinless body and sacrificed Himself once for all, and accomplished the remission of sins. The High Priest we need is precisely this Jesus Christ.

The earthly high priests had to offer sacrifices daily. But since our High Priest accomplished it once for all, we are not people who seek the remission of sins again each time a wrong comes to light, as though carrying a new offering, and live always in guilt. Do not try to supplement what the Lord did with prayers of repentance; admit your wrongs without hiding them, and cleanse your heart by faith in the atonement already accomplished.

This faith does not let wrongs go neglected. For the person who makes his own deeds his righteousness, even admitting one wrong is frightening. It is because the righteousness he has piled up seems about to collapse. But the person who believes that Jesus had sin passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received even its judgment has no reason to hide his faults. He can lay down the heart that tries to prove, "I am right," and confess, "Lord, You are right. I am lacking." Then he can also receive correction and learn again.

From service that repays sin to service offered in thanksgiving

If the Lord has washed away all our sins, then what is service now? It is not paying the price to remove sin, but what the priest who has received the remission of sins does in thanksgiving. The *"HOLINESS TO THE LORD"* engraved on the forehead of the high priest also shows what the priestly office is for. The purpose for which we, who have received the

remission of sins, serve also lies in helping those still in sin obtain holiness before God.

Concerning the service we offer to God, the First Epistle of Peter says this.

"You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).

The spiritual sacrifices we offer are offered *"through Jesus Christ."* Our service, too, rises before God not because of our flawless results, but because of the High Priest who bore our sins. Here lies the reason we can serve relying on the Lord even on the days our labor seems small, and even on the days we feel our own weakness greatly. The more lacking we are, the more the gospel of the water and the Spirit shines in our hearts.

If you are a person who preaches the remission of sins to others, apply this gospel to yourself first. Do not leave only your own shortcomings outside that salvation while preaching that the Lord bore all sins. If the one who preaches does not believe first, the one who hears cannot believe either. Only when you yourself believe in this salvation and have no sin in your heart can you preach boldly to the person pressed down by sin as well.

Do not try to cover over the sins exposed while serving with more labor. Do not withdraw your heart from the work of serving because of those sins either. Both the way of repaying by working more and the way of stepping back are ways of looking for the basis on which to stand before God in oneself. God, who had Aaron bear the iniquity of the people's holy things in order to receive them, has given us Jesus Christ, the High Priest in heaven, who bore all sins.

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Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, received their judgment on the Cross, and rose again from death. Believe with your hearts every day this right thing God has done. Just as the plate of gold was always on Aaron's forehead, that faith is the *"HOLINESS TO THE LORD"* that must always be on us who serve. ✉

Sermon 28 by Paul C. Jong

Right judgment by one who holds souls in his heart

< Exodus 28:15–30 >

“You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it. It shall be doubled into a square: a span shall be its length, and a span shall be its width. And you shall put settings of stones in it, four rows of stones: The first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and an emerald; this shall be the first row; the second row shall be a turquoise, a sapphire, and a diamond; the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper. They shall be set in gold settings. And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes. You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold. And you shall make two rings of gold for the breastplate, and put the two rings on the two ends of the breastplate. Then you shall put the two braided chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breastplate; and the other two ends of the two braided chains you shall fasten to the two settings, and put them on the shoulder straps of the ephod in the front. You shall make two rings of gold, and put them on the two ends of the

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breastplate, on the edge of it, which is on the inner side of the ephod. And two other rings of gold you shall make, and put them on the two shoulder straps, underneath the ephod toward its front, right at the seam above the intricately woven band of the ephod. They shall bind the breastplate by means of its rings to the rings of the ephod, using a blue cord, so that it is above the intricately woven band of the ephod, and so that the breastplate does not come loose from the ephod. So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the LORD continually. And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually."

To a person who has worshiped together with us for a long time, we easily say reassuring words. We think that since he has believed that zealously, he must have been saved. If it is our own family, we want to think so all the more. But when we tell a person we love that he has been saved, what is the basis of those words? Is it the years spent together? Is it that person's devotion? Or is it clear evidence that the person believes with his heart in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished?

We cannot help a soul by saying only what the other person will be glad to hear. To a person still afraid because of sin, we may praise only his zeal without preaching the gospel that removes that fear. Then that person may attend church still longer without knowing how his sins are remitted. The high priest went in before the LORD with the stones engraved with

the names of the twelve tribes on his breast. What the priest who held the people in his heart teaches us is responsibility for that soul. The love that remembers a name goes as far as examining what that person believes.

The more we love a person, the more clearly we must examine the basis of his salvation

God had Aaron carry the names of the sons of Israel on his breast. But what those names were engraved on was *"the breastplate of judgment."* A breastplate is a plate worn on the breast. He had the Urim and the Thummim put in it, and told Aaron to bear the judgment of the people over his heart always. Holding the people in his heart and judging rightly concerning those people were given together on one breastplate. So judgment was not something the priest could avoid, but the office entrusted to him. It is not that we withdraw judgment because we love, but that because we love, we judge rightly before God.

The Urim is light and the Thummim is perfection. With this light and perfection placed over his heart—that is, with the light of the salvation God gave and the perfection of that salvation—the high priest judged whether the people believed rightly. If the one who judges says right or wrong according to his mood at the moment, the Church of God cannot stand. Nor may the standard applied to a close friend differ from the standard applied to a stranger. For a child, for a parent, and for a person who has believed long, the standard of judgment is the same.

We easily make what is visible outwardly the evidence of salvation. We look at knowing much of the Bible, never

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missing worship, and taking on difficult work. When someone emphatically tells of an experience of meeting God fervently, the person who was going to preach the gospel is sometimes the one who shrinks back. It is because the standard of judgment is not clear in his heart. This does not mean that such things are not precious, but whether that person believes that his sin was passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John is known only by hearing him separately. If, to the question of how he received the remission of sins, he speaks only of his own labor and experience, that soul needs the gospel.

When we bring this up, we may hesitate, wondering whether the other person will be uncomfortable or whether I might be proud. But if we do not tell that fact to the person who needs the remission of sins, who will help him? The priest with the breastplate of judgment over his heart preached the will of God that the people needed. We who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit also discern a person's faith by that gospel, and preach the word of salvation to the soul still under sin. There is no reason to be timid before this work.

First there must be the witness of God within oneself

Before examining the faith of others, there is something we must first have. It is the witness of the salvation we ourselves believe. The breastplate of judgment was over the heart of the high priest. The one who judged believed first, and judged by that faith. Remembering and repeating the words of a person who knows the gospel and believing with the heart that the

Lord had my sins passed on to Him are different. One cannot demand only assurance from others while one is oneself still afraid, not knowing how to remove sin.

God did not place the witness of salvation in our character or record. He gave it as the word concerning His Son Jesus Christ.

"This is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself" (1 John 5:9–10).

That witness is *"in himself,"* in the person who believes. Our breastplate of judgment today is not a visible plate of stones. When the word that Jesus is God, that He had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and that He shed His blood on the Cross, received that judgment, and made us righteous is believed in the heart, that becomes our breastplate of judgment. Just as the breastplate of judgment was woven of the same gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen as the ephod, the standard of judgment is that one gospel revealed in the ephod.

Jesus, who accomplished this salvation, is God. The Lord, who created heaven and earth, came in the body of a man to save sinners. He had all the sin of mankind transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, and paid the price of that sin by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross. And He rose again and became the eternal Savior of those who believe. The fact that Jesus is God is not accepted by the human mind. The Holy Spirit makes us believe it. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of sins and becomes a child of God.

Is this witness in your hearts? Do you believe the word that Jesus had all your sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and that the judgment of those sins also

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ended on the Cross? If so, your salvation is a salvation that can be confirmed by the word. The person who has the witness in his heart is not shaken whatever others may say, and can explain to others, too, why he has received the remission of sins. It is not forcing on the other person a peace one has not confirmed in one's own heart, but preaching the same gospel that saved oneself.

When we examine by the same gospel, we do not confuse two things

When we examine faith by the standard of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we do not confuse two things. One is a faith that, though full of zeal, has not yet received the remission of sins, and the other is a faith that has received the remission of sins, though there are shortcomings in conduct. To the former person we preach the gospel of the remission of sins, and the latter person we acknowledge as righteous and nurture his faith. If we treat the two in the same way, judging by outward appearance alone, we cannot give either of them the help he needs.

Let us think of a person who has believed in Jesus for a long time but says that his sins still remain. While believing in the blood of the Cross, he believes that the sins committed daily must be washed away daily by prayers of repentance. To tell him, "Since you pray so zealously, you have been saved," is not right judgment. Salvation does not depend on how many times one has confessed sin, but lies in believing that Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and received its judgment.

To a faith that knows only the Cross and does not know the baptism He received from John, we must say clearly, in the light of the standard of judgment, "This is not yet salvation." There are also people who ask, "Then are you saying that Jesus, who received baptism from John, became a sinner?" But if Jesus did not bear our sins through the baptism He received from John at that time, when did He bear those sins? Paul, Peter, and the apostle John all believed together in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross. Likewise correct the faith that calls Jesus Savior yet does not believe that He is God.

On the other hand, a person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may still be hasty and immature in judgment. Such wrongs we correct with the word. But do not judge that even the salvation the Lord accomplished is imperfect on account of those shortcomings. The perfection the Thummim points to is not the perfection of conduct but the perfection of faith. The righteous person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel is in fact the light. Acknowledge as righteous the person who believes that the Lord washed away all sins, and help him throw away his wrongs and grow within that faith.

If, having seen conduct we do not like, we deny today the salvation we acknowledged until yesterday, my feelings have become the standard of judgment. Conversely, if we do not examine the content of the gospel a person believes because he treats me well, favor has become the standard. The word to bear the judgment *"over his heart before the LORD continually"* corrects such hearts of ours. Each time we deal with a person, we return to the same truth of salvation.

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Hear what a person believes and preach the word that soul needs

Just as a doctor who cannot diagnose a disease accurately cannot be called a doctor, if we cannot discern between a person who has received the remission of sins and one who has not, we cannot do the work of a priest. But right judgment is not a matter of attaching a label to a person and leaving. Only when we judge can we preach the gospel to the person who has not received the remission of sins, and teach faith to the person who has received it. Here lies the reason God placed the names of the people and the judgment over the same heart.

Therefore, hear the content that person actually believes. Examine the word together: how he believes he received the remission of sins, what he understands to be the reason Jesus received baptism from John, and what the basis is for all his sins having been resolved. It is not to silence him with questions, but to preach clearly the truth of salvation that person does not yet know. You may consider how to bring it up depending on the person, but this conversation must certainly be had someday. Without this conversation we can neither judge rightly nor preach the gospel rightly.

When a part he does not yet believe comes to light, do not send him away vaguely telling him to try harder. If he does not know the baptism Jesus received from John, open that word and preach it. If he fears the judgment of sin, preach that Jesus, who bore our sins, was judged in our place on the Cross. Preaching the word specifically like this is the service that holds a soul in one’s heart. It is not something to say once or twice and stop, but something to continue until the day the Lord comes.

Confess your faith to one another with the brothers and sisters who believe in the gospel as well. Who are our brothers and sisters? Those who have received the remission of sins. Do not think that because one has already received the remission of sins there is no longer any word to share. When we tell one another how we believe, our hearts are in accord, and the parts wrongly understood are set right. Without speaking, we cannot know what breastplate of judgment is in that person's heart. To a brother discouraged because of the shortcomings of the flesh, we can confirm again the salvation he believes.

The high priest went in before the LORD with the names of the sons of Israel on his breast. We, too, hold those close to us and the people of the whole world in our hearts, pray, and actually preach the gospel. If you know well that person's labor and character but have not heard on what basis he is assured of the remission of sins, now share the word of salvation together instead of vague reassurance. If he has not yet believed, preach clearly, and if he believes in the same salvation, rejoice together and encourage his faith.

Believing is light and perfection. God has made us, who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel, the light, and has made our faith perfect. Keep that light and perfection over your heart, and preach the word of salvation without hesitation to the soul you love. ✉

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Sermon 29 by Paul C. Jong

The priests who eat together by grace

< Exodus 29:31–34 >

“And you shall take the ram of the consecration and boil its flesh in the holy place. Then Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them; but an outsider shall not eat them, because they are holy. And if any of the flesh of the consecration offerings, or of the bread, remains until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it is holy.”

Even a person who serves God needs something to eat. Working for others does not make one a person who can live receiving nothing himself. At the consecration of the priests, God had Aaron and his sons eat the meat and the bread. The priests always lived eating the portion of the offering that was waved before God and then brought back down, and the bread made of fine flour. Though entrusted with holy work, they were still people who lived by what God gave.

We, too, as we preach the gospel and help the faith of others, easily forget this fact. Someone asks me, seeks my help, and learns the word. Then we think that there should no longer be anything for which I need help. When a weak heart is

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exposed, we are ashamed, and it is hard even to say that we held a wrong thought. The worry arises: if people know that I, who care for them, am such a person, how will they see me? From then on we meet people with an appearance different from our actual hearts.

But, dear fellow believers, is the grace that established us as priests a grace that is kept only if we hide our own faults? Does the Lord, who gave us the remission of sins, now not know our weakness? Because the Lord knows all our weakness, He becomes our true friend and helps us. Look at Aaron and his sons eating the meat and the bread of the consecration. What they ate together was not a prize proving their own excellence, but those things with which the atonement was made, used to consecrate and sanctify them. This eating shows the fellowship that those who have received the remission of sins share before God today.

The grace that those who have been sanctified receive and eat

Let us read verses 32 and 33 again.

"Then Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of meeting. They shall eat those things with which the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them; but an outsider shall not eat them, because they are holy."

God clearly appointed who eats and what is eaten. Aaron and his sons eat the meat of the ram of the consecration and the bread in the basket at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Because they were holy things used to consecrate and sanctify them, they were food that *"an outsider shall not eat."* This

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table was a place only for those who had received the remission of sins. Verse 34 says to burn with fire what remains until morning. Even eating was according to what God had appointed.

What was the reason they came to eat holy food? It was not because they were so outstanding among men that no blemish could be found in them. At the consecration, Aaron and his sons first offered a sin offering for themselves. Those who were to serve the people first had to have their own sins remitted. God washed people who were of no worth at all before Him and established them as priests. And afterward, too, they lived eating what God gave.

It is the same with us today. Though we have faith and have received salvation, without the fellowship of eating this food of the soul together, we cannot live, for we go hungry. However much of the Bible we know, without fellowship the heart dries up. The more one stands in a position of teaching others, the more one must remember this fact.

The meat the priests ate was the meat of the sacrificial offering of atonement. The One that the offering points to is Jesus Christ. The food we eat today is Jesus Christ, who was sacrificed for our sins, and the word of the salvation He accomplished. It is not that sin is washed away by a rite of eating meat or bread; it is believing with the heart in the salvation of the Lord, who sanctified us, and living sharing that grace with one another.

The atonement accomplished before our faults

To share the grace of atonement, we must first know clearly what that grace is. Aaron and his sons had no ability to remove

their own sins. God had a sacrificial offering prepared and had them lay their hands on its head. The offering that had their sins passed on to it shed its blood and was put to death. It was not that sin was covered by human resolve, but that God had the sacrifice He appointed receive the judgment of sin.

Jesus came to fulfill this promise. God sent the Messiah to John the Baptist and had Him receive baptism in the form of the laying on of hands. Through that baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto Him. And bearing that sin, He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and thereby received in our place the judgment that was to come upon us. Jesus, who rose again on the third day, is our Savior, living even now. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit has all his sins washed away and comes to have a heart without sin, and the Holy Spirit dwells in that heart and leads him by the word.

Both before we knew Jesus and after we came to know Him, we committed countless sins. The pride, falsehood, and hatred of others that came to light after we knew the gospel are not outside that sin of the world Jesus washed away once and for all. So the person who is in the Lord has no reason to groan over faults that have come to light. It is because Jesus has atoned for all sin.

Therefore the fellowship of those who have received the remission of sins is not a place for producing a new atonement. Nor does sin decrease by the number of times we confess our wrongs to one another. While admitting our wrongs, we believe in the atonement already accomplished, and by that faith we turn back from the wrong way and receive the guidance of the word. Because the atonement has been

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completed, we can be bold before God even while admitting our faults.

The heart that hides and the heart that condemns itself

The person who hides his faults thinks he can be at ease only if he protects himself. He tells of the good things he did, but does not speak of what he judged wrongly. Even when others know the problem, he blames the circumstances and keeps his own rightness. Then, though he speaks of the gospel together with others, he cannot share his heart. In a heart whose fellowship is blocked, darkness piles up, and in the end, bound by his own weakness, he grows distant from God on his own.

Conversely, there are also people who close their mouths, pressed down by their own faults. It is right to acknowledge before God that one is a useless person. There are times when one must see one's wretched self all the way to the bottom. But to sit down there and withdraw alone, saying, "What can someone like me do?" is not faith. The One who sets us up again in that place is the Lord. We rise again by believing the truth the Lord accomplished.

Paul speaks in this way of the fact given to the person who is in Christ.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1–2).

Believing this word does not mean we can call a wrong right. When I speak of my faults in fellowship, I also come to

hear rebuke. But since we have already received the remission of sins, we do not collapse even when we hear rebuke. We only need to hear the rebuke and correct what needs to be corrected. Correcting a wrong and going back under the judgment of sin are different things. Because Jesus delivered us from condemnation, we can admit our wrongs without protecting ourselves with falsehood.

We are the righteous who have received grace, but our flesh has not become perfect. After receiving the remission of sins, we see our own weakness all the more. The person who knows his own weakness relies on the Lord. Even when he comes to know a fault he did not know before, he does not conclude that there is no way of salvation for him, but comes to know more clearly what kind of people the Lord has saved. The assurance of the remission of sins does not block honest fellowship, but rather becomes the basis on which we can be honest.

Fellowship in which we help one another with the word

Then how should we have fellowship? It does not end with speaking of our circumstances and then covering for one another by saying it is all right. Even when you hear the fault of the other person, do not say that the fault is right, but say that the truth is right. We hold our thoughts up to the word and examine together what was wrong and what to believe and follow. Knowing what is right, throwing away what is wrong, and coming out little by little into the light—that is true fellowship.

Suppose, for instance, that our hearts have grown weary while carrying out the work entrusted to us. We tell others to

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take heart, yet we cannot say that we ourselves have no strength. Acting as though we were fine, we may neglect the work entrusted to us, and, to hide that, we may even say things that differ from the facts. What is needed at this time is not a more plausible explanation, but honestly sharing the weary heart and the thing done wrong, and receiving the help of the word. When we share together, even a heavy burden becomes light, and the darkness of the heart is lifted.

It is not only the person receiving help who must be honest. When the person who leads others first acknowledges his own weakness, those who follow him can also be changed and live rightly. If one draws a line, saying that I am a person without such faults, one cannot help the weak, and rather comes to condemn them. The person who knows that Jesus bore even the sins he himself committed does not despise the other person, and while speaking clearly of the wrong, leads that person to the salvation of the Lord.

Also, exposing one's faults must not become boasting of one's faults. It is not that one must bring out and show everything. Share as much as is fit to share with brothers and sisters, and take the rest alone to the Lord and entrust it to Him. We do not have fellowship in order to keep repeating, "I am this kind of person by nature, so it cannot be helped," but to say, since the Lord has saved such people as us, let us now receive the guidance of the Lord. The center of fellowship is not the size of my mistakes but the truth of the salvation that delivered me.

Knowing one's own weakness and seeking help is not abandoning the office of priest, but acknowledging that one lives by what God has given. Just as Aaron and his sons needed something to eat, we who serve the gospel also need the food of the word and the fellowship of faith. Do not stop receiving it

on the grounds that you have served long, or that you have preached the word to many people.

Is there a fault that weighs on your heart? Do not lose even the joy of salvation while hiding it, and do not turn away condemning yourself alone either. It is a sin Jesus had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and for which He paid the price on the Cross. Believing that fact in your heart, be honest before the word.

What we need is not the ability to seem like a person without blemish, but the faith by which a person who lives by grace acknowledges that grace. Both when you learn and correct your wrongs and when you help others, rely on the salvation of the Lord, who sanctified us. For those who have received the same grace of atonement to live sharing that truth together—that is the blessing of the priests who ate together at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and the blessed fellowship given to us who serve God today. ✉

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Sermon 30 by Paul C. Jong

Service offered as fine flour

< Exodus 29:1–9 >

“And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to Me as priests: Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (you shall make them of wheat flour). You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams. And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod. You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban. And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him. Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. And you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them. The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute. So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons.”

If we look at what is brought to the consecration, there are not only animals. One young bull and two rams without blemish are brought, and bread, cakes, and wafers made of fine flour are also brought in one basket. Ordinary people had only to bring an offering to receive the remission of sins. But those

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who were to take on the office of priest had something more to bring in addition. Today we want to engrave on our hearts, among what was in that basket, the word *"you shall make them of wheat flour."*

A grain of wheat, left as it is, is a grain of wheat. To become flour it must be ground. Only when ground does it become bread and cakes, and food God will receive. Let us examine with this picture our hearts in serving God. Though we say we have received the remission of sins from Jesus, when we serve the Lord there are many times when we bring out our own thoughts and the ways we ourselves have decided, just as they are. The words "we believe in the gospel" and the heart that will work only as I want are there together.

To know the gospel and be able to explain it is precious. But knowing the gospel does not mean that even my thoughts have always become right. Even without being broken, one can preach the gospel and put on a plausible appearance. One may tell others to believe in the Lord while relying only on one's own experience and talent when judging one's own plans. What God has us learn when He establishes us as workers is to break our own thoughts, accept the will of the Lord, and serve by faith.

The sacrifice that washes sin and the heart that learns to serve

Let us read verses 1 to 3 again.

"And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for ministering to Me as priests: Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil

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(you shall make them of wheat flour). You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, with the bull and the two rams."

While commanding that they be consecrated to the office of priest to serve Him, God had food made of fine flour brought together with the sacrificial offerings. What must first be made clear here is the order of the remission of sins and service. Before becoming a priest, one first had to receive the remission of sins through the sacrifice of atonement. It is not that a person breaks his own stubbornness enough and sin disappears by that humility. What removes sin is the sacrifice God prepared.

That sacrifice is Jesus Christ. Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and because of those sins He shed His blood on the Cross and was judged in our place. And He rose again and saved us. There is no merit we added in order to receive this salvation. We did not become righteous because our character was gentle, nor were our sins remitted because we obeyed well. We became people without sin by believing in Jesus, and God gives the Holy Spirit to the person who has believed in this gospel.

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13).

But receiving the remission of sins and becoming a servant of God are not the same thing. Even one who brings himself out as he is, saying, "This is how I believe in God," can receive the remission of sins. But leaving himself as he is, he cannot become a worker of God. Brothers and sisters who have just received the remission of sins are often still each a single grain of wheat, as they are. They have accepted the gospel of

salvation, but as to what work to take on, whom to work with, and how to serve, they regard only what I want as right. The word to become fine flour is directed precisely at this heart.

To become fine flour does not mean to afflict yourself in order to obtain salvation. It is the word telling the person already saved to place his own will under the will of the Lord and serve. And breaking oneself is also done not by human strength but by faith. The person who acknowledges the fact that the remission of sins is complete but that even my judgment has not become perfect receives the guidance of the Lord.

If we boast of our talents, we miss the work entrusted to us

We commonly look at what we do well and decide even how God should use us. We think, “If He used me for this kind of work, I would do well.” Since we can handle work quickly, we consider that others, too, should conform to my way. Then, when the work does not suit our own thinking and we are not acknowledged, our unbroken lump of self is exposed as it is.

Then what happens? We are zealous when my opinion is accepted, but close our hearts when the work is decided in another direction. Even when there is work that is absolutely necessary, we regard it as not suited to me. When a person laboring for the same gospel suggests a different method, before examining the content we take it as ignoring my ability. We keep working but lose joy, and it also becomes hard to become one with others. It is not because we lack talent, but because we have not been broken.

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The world uses people who are different and unique, but in the Church of God, God uses the broken person, the person who does not insist on his own shape. The master makes flour into whatever he wants to make and uses it however he wants to use it. Flour has no shape of its own to insist on. And flour is kneaded and united into one. When the heart that says you must go first, the heart that says only the method you have been using is right, and the heart that will work only with people who acknowledge you come to light before the word, acknowledge them and throw them away. Then you can join your strength with others and serve the gospel.

This does not mean, however, that talents are to be done away with. The Church of God also uses all the talents each person has. Only, before using talent, one must first become fine flour. However much education and skill one has, an unbroken person is hard to use. When one thinks that because of one's talent one has gained the right to push through one's own will, that talent rather becomes a hindrance to following the guidance of the Lord.

Deny your own thoughts, with the word as the standard

When we speak of laying down our own thoughts, a standard is needed. We cannot call the other person's words wrong merely because we feel bad, or right merely because they are pleasant to hear. If we look with the standard set in the wrong place, everything looks wrong, but if we place the standard in God, it is accurate. Confirm from the word what God has said and whether this work is fitting for serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This is the word Jesus spoke to those who wished to follow Him.

"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me'" (Luke 9:23).

If one follows Jesus yet will not deny oneself at all, on what road could one go together with the Lord? If I will do only the work comfortable for me, listen only to the words of those who acknowledge me, and serve only when things go according to my plan, in the end I am following myself. There are many times when the will of God is on the opposite side of what the thoughts of the flesh want. And the Lord said *"daily."* Just as flour, if left alone, clumps together again into a lump, the thoughts of mine that I laid down yesterday clump together again today. The thoughts of mine that come to light today I place before the word today.

Suppose we are discussing in the church, where we serve together, the work that is needed now. I want work that is visible, but what is needed now may be the work of helping the labor of others from behind. If at that time I first harbor the feeling that no one recognizes me, I cannot see the value of the work entrusted to me. But if I hear why that work is needed, think of the benefit to the gospel, and set my heart, I can take on the same work with thanksgiving.

We may also hear an exhortation to correct a shortcoming in my way of doing things. Do not look first for reasons to explain yourself as soon as you hear those words. Examine what you have missed. Accept as right that those who believed before you rebuke and lead you, and if your thinking was wrong, admit that it was wrong. The person who can acknowledge that the thoughts of the flesh are not right becomes a servant of God. Doing so does not take away the

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dignity of a person who serves God; it takes away the self-boasting that was blocking him from learning.

Serving together with the church is not a life of never once stating my opinion. Each can share what he knows and discuss the work that is needed. Only, throw away the heart that will join in only if your words are accepted. Following by faith is in the end better than insisting on my own style to the last, and the heart is more at ease as well.

The service of faith offered together with oil

In the text there is not only fine flour. There are cakes mixed with oil and wafers anointed with oil. The fine flour was offered together with oil. A broken heart, too, must be offered together with faith. It is following the Lord not by form but by faith. Also, in verse 7 God had the anointing oil poured on Aaron's head. This means receiving the will of God into one's own head and thinking, acting, and following according to that will. Things coming to pass not according to our thoughts but according to the will of the Lord—that is the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Denying oneself is also done by faith. Service that only outwardly follows while inwardly still regarding oneself as right collapses before long. Complaints kept suppressed burst out again when another matter arises. Service not done by faith is only an outward form. When one believes in one's heart that the will of the Lord is right and that I am a person who receives His guidance, and lays down one's own thoughts by that faith, the direction of service changes.

If we try to produce all the work of God by our own strength, we soon grow weary. Only when the results are good

does my faith seem all right, and when the work is blocked we feel as though abandoned. But the work of the Lord is not work we accomplish. Because it is the work of God, the Holy Spirit is with us and accomplishes it. We serve not with human zeal alone but with zeal added to faith.

Nor does being broken become an excuse for avoiding the work entrusted to us. The person who knows that he is nothing rather lives holding on to God. So the person who has become flour tries whatever work the Lord entrusts to him. After the confession acknowledging one's lack, the steps of faith follow. Hear the word, pray, discuss, and do the work entrusted to you. In that process we come to learn that God works through us.

To be established as a priest is not to gain a name of being higher than others, but to belong to God and take on the work of serving Him. Yet there is no blessing more precious than receiving the office of serving God in this world where we live only for a while. What within you is not yet broken today? Is it the thought that you must absolutely go first? The heart that will work only with people who acknowledge you? The stubbornness that your way must not be changed? Acknowledge it before the word and lay it down. You lay it down in order to follow the Lord, who has already saved you.

Jesus cleansed our sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, and He is alive and leads us even now. For what would the person who believes in this Lord let go of the joy of following Him in order to keep one thought of his own? Flour is shaped as the master wishes. Like fine flour mixed with oil, let us entrust ourselves, broken by faith, into the hands of the Lord. ✉

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Sermon 31 by Paul C. Jong

The sins that God will remember no more

< Hebrews 10:14–18 >

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin."

There are times when a past wrong comes vividly to mind. Even if others have forgotten it, we ourselves cannot forget. Though we say we believe in God, when a sin committed long ago comes to mind, we feel as though that sin alone still remains before God. If we commit a wrong again today, we sometimes think that the remission of sins we believed in before is insufficient. So it seems that only if we plead longer, repent more deeply, and resolve never to do it again will God accept us.

The ones who remember the sin are we, but the One who decides whether to judge that sin is God. The atonement God accomplished does not become less finished because I cannot forget. In the word we read today, God said that He will remember our sins and lawless deeds no more. Rather than a

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promise to erase sins from our memory, it is a promise of salvation that He will not again hold us accountable for and judge the sins Jesus Christ remitted. The reason our hearts waver commonly lies in not knowing where that sin has already been passed on to.

God said there is no more sacrifice to offer

Let us read verse 18 first.

"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin."

The reason the sacrifices ceased is that God remitted sin. They did not cease because we declared that we had resolved all our sins. The text first says, *"Where there is remission of these,"* and then says, *"There is no longer an offering for sin."* Engrave this order on your hearts. The Lord completed the atonement, and we believe in that completed atonement. The basis for obtaining the remission of sins lies not in the size of my resolution but in the sacrifice Jesus Christ offered.

At the altar of burnt offering in the court of the tabernacle, a lamb was offered daily, morning and evening. And on the Day of Atonement the high priest made atonement *"for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year" (Leviticus 16:34)*. It was a great grace that the sins piled up over a year were passed on to the offering at one time on that day. But when the next year came, that sacrifice had to be offered again. The Book of Hebrews says of those sacrifices, *"In those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year" (Hebrews 10:3)*. The sacrifices that reminded them of sins every year and the covenant that says of sins, *"I will remember no more,"* stand face to face here.

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That statute taught that sin is passed on to the sacrificial offering and must be judged, and it was a promise that a Savior would come who would deliver us from sin forever. The salvation Jesus accomplished is the salvation that ends this repetition. The person who, while believing in Christ, goes around looking for a new sacrifice to remove his sins is, inwardly, as good as hoping, "If only the Lord would come once more and hang on the Cross once more, my sins would disappear." He has not yet fully believed in the effect of the sacrifice the Lord offered.

Praying many prayers of repentance and paying the wages of sin are different things. The tears shed over a wrong do not become the blood of the sacrificial offering, and the time spent long prostrate before God does not take the place of the punishment of sin. Moreover, the time we spend doing wrong as we live is always longer than the time we spend praying. That punishment the Lord has already received. If we think we must remove the remaining sins by prayer, we are as good as dividing the sins the Lord remitted from the sins I must remit.

Yet if we suppose that since there is no sacrifice to offer, there is now no more use for faith either, we rather fall into a trap. We still pray, but the basis we bring before God has changed. God is not One who receives an atonement we have made; He is the One who accomplished atonement through His own Son and tells us to believe in that salvation. Rely on the Son, who sacrificed Himself for you, rather than on your earnestness in prayer. Faith is receiving as a free gift the salvation God has already given.

There is a reason He does not remember our sins

Let us read verse 17 again.

"Then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.'"

That God does not remember our sins is not because He examined sin wrongly or regarded it as a trifle. God, who demands the wages of sin, Himself sent the Savior to pay the price of that sin. Therefore, behind the promise that He will remember them no more stands Jesus Christ, who already bore those sins and was judged. God passed our sins on to the Son and actually removed them by the sacrifice of that Son.

Look at one scene of the Day of Atonement. Aaron laid both his hands on the head of the live goat and confessed the sins of the people. Where did God say to put those sins? He did not tell the people to engrave them more deeply on their own breasts. He had those sins put on the head of the goat.

"Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:21–22).

On that day the confessing of sins was carried out together with the laying on of hands that passed the sins on to the offering God had appointed. The goat departed into an uninhabited land bearing the iniquities of the people. Also, the high priest took the blood of the sin offering goat for the people, went inside the veil, and sprinkled it as the word says, *"Sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat" (Leviticus 16:15).* From above that mercy seat of which He had

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said, *"There I will meet with you" (Exodus 25:22)*, God saw that blood. Because the sins were passed on to the offering and that blood was shed, God did not hold them accountable for those sins again.

Jesus fulfilled precisely this promise of the passing on of sin. The Son of God came clothed in the body of a man and received baptism from John at the Jordan River. The baptism Jesus received from John was not to wash away His own sins. Through John the Baptist, who represents mankind, He had the sin of the world passed on to His own body. Look at the words Jesus spoke to John.

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him" (Matthew 3:15).

There is a reason in the word *"thus."* Only by having our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John could Jesus save us justly. He thus personally fulfilled the passing on of sin shown through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, and with that body bearing the sin of the world He hung on the Cross and was judged for the sins of you and me. The Lord died as the price of our sins, was buried, and rose again from death on the third day. Believe in His having had sin passed on to Him, the judgment of the Cross, and the resurrection together.

Jesus had *"their sins and their lawless deeds"* of which verse 17 speaks—that is, all the sins the law points out—passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and finished their judgment on the Cross. The sins God said He will remember no more are precisely those sins. Do not gauge salvation by how much you agonized today, but look at how Jesus took on your sins and what judgment He received.

The effect of one offering goes beyond our whole lifetime

We believe that the Lord removed our past sins, yet before today's sin we waver again. We sometimes ask whether He bore only the sins up to the time we believed in Jesus and the sins committed afterward remain separately. We live today, too, in the present tense, but the Lord already had all our sins passed on to Him at that time and finished that work. The Lord is not One who follows after us and deals with sins only after we commit them. He is the Savior who took on all the sin of mankind once and for all.

John testified of Jesus in this way.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (John 1:29).

In *"the sin of the world"* my sins are also included. The scope of the sins Jesus had transferred onto Him is not determined by our memory. Do not divide the sins you can tell others from the sins you have hidden, or the sins already noticed from the sins not yet realized. All the sins we commit from birth until death are within that sin of the world. That is why the effect of the sacrifice offered once is eternal. The Lord did not remit only a part and leave the rest to our prayers or efforts.

Let us read verse 14.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."

The Lord has perfected us forever by one offering. Verse 12 calls that offering *"one sacrifice for sins forever."* So do not put off its effect until the day our deeds become perfect. The holiness of *"those who are being sanctified"* does not come

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from man but from above, from God. The person who believes with his heart in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross is, however lacking, a righteous person without sin. It is not a boast that there is no wrong in his conduct, but a confession that the Lord has removed all his sins.

That God has made us perfect does not mean that we may hide our wrongs. If, when a wrong is pointed out, one says, "I am righteous, so there is no problem at all," one is using the meaning of the remission of sins as one's own excuse. Even the righteous commit wrongs in the flesh. Before the word of God, acknowledge that as wrong. After that, do not try to produce a new atonement, but ruminate by faith on the sacrifice already offered. Even that very sin Jesus had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and was judged for on the Cross. When we ruminate on it by faith like this, the heart becomes clean again. The honesty that admits wrong and the assurance that believes in the complete remission of sins go together.

Believe the witness of the Holy Spirit more than your own heart

Verse 15 begins this promise with the words *"the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us."* And that witness is the word of the covenant of God that leads immediately on to *"says the LORD."* The witness of the Holy Spirit does not have us measure the size of our emotion; it makes known the covenant of God and the sacrifice of Christ. Emotion does not stay long, and zeal and tears also dry up with time. Even so, the sins Jesus had passed on to Him do not come back to us. Rather than striving

to revive past feelings, believe the witness of God, who is speaking now.

The word of that covenant is verse 16: *"I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them."* God, who knows that man cannot keep all the law, gave a new law different from the law of works of the old covenant, the law by which one obtains salvation by believing. It is the salvation Jesus accomplished by having the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, being judged on the Cross, and rising again from death—that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. God has put this law into the heart of the person who believes and written it in his mind.

Our memory easily grows dim. So God engraved that salvation on our hearts and minds so that we would not forget it after being saved. God does not remember our sins again, and He has us remember that salvation. Each time you discover a shortcoming, read again this record engraved on your heart. When you ask, "Has the Lord removed even what I did with a guilty conscience?" the word written on your heart answers. However carefully we think it over, this law is the law of God, who saved us justly.

If we only try to erase the memory of our sins, we keep looking into ourselves. We look for the basis of faith within ourselves, examining how much more at ease we have become and whether we are better than yesterday. Faith is accepting the same conclusion as God concerning what Jesus accomplished. If God says He has remitted, He has remitted. If He says there is no more sacrifice to offer, there is none. When we believe that word, our hearts are freed from the fear of the judgment of sin.

Let the one who has discovered his own wrong today also believe this word. Turn back from the wrong way, and if you

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have harmed a person, admit that wrong and set it right. Only, do not present that as the price of the remission of sins. There is nothing to add to the price of sin Jesus paid. The peace obtained by believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished is not a peace that comes from pretending not to know our wrongs. It is the peace obtained because there is a Savior who, knowing my sins, took them all on and was judged.

The promise of God is more certain than your memory. The sacrifice Jesus Christ offered is more complete than your resolution. Each time the memory of sin comes to mind, do not look for a new sacrifice, but hold on again by faith to that one sacrifice already offered. Even the sins in that memory Jesus had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and finished their judgment on the Cross. God has said that He will not remember those sins again. We are not people waiting for another sacrifice that will remove sin, but people who have already received the eternal remission of sins. Every day, take out this promise God has engraved on your hearts, and live by faith as people who have received the remission of sins. ✉

Sermon 32 by Paul C. Jong

One who serves the living God with a clean conscience

< Hebrews 9:11–14 >

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

There is a clear purpose in God's having saved us from sin. It is that He cleansed us, who had lived in fear of the judgment of sin, so that we might serve the living God. The end of today's text speaks of service. The news that Jesus Christ accomplished eternal atonement is at the same time the news that we have been spared the judgment to come and the news that we can now serve the holy God.

Yet there are times when we, trying to serve the Lord, step back because of what we see in ourselves. With our mouths we

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speak of salvation, but our words and conduct fall short of it, and when things do not go as we wish while working together, our feelings are hurt. Looking at such a self, we come to think that we have no qualification to preach the word to others. If we consider that we have done wrong before God and the judgment of that sin still remains, how anxious we would be! So it seems that only after doing something better could we live before the Lord without shame.

To such people as us, the Book of Hebrews points to the blood of Christ. It says: Shall not Jesus' offering of His own body cleanse our conscience and make us serve God? Do not stop at knowing how great our weakness is, but look at the sacrifice of Jesus, who made us, weak as we are, people who serve.

Before the serving hands, the conscience must first be cleansed

Doing much work with the hands does not cleanse even the conscience. If we serve while leaving the unresolved judgment of sin in our hearts, that service is easily driven by fear rather than joy. We work in order to be accepted before God, feel a little relieved when we have done the work well, and become anxious again when we have done poorly. On a day we have done wrong, we try to repay that wrong by laboring more than usual. Pleading and trying to make amends each time we do wrong is a weak method that people have always used. If we do this, we make even the work of God a means of paying the price of our own sins.

Just before this, the Book of Hebrews says that the gifts and sacrifices of the tabernacle *"cannot make him who performed*

the service perfect in regard to the conscience" (Hebrews 9:9), and that they were *"imposed until the time of reformation" (Hebrews 9:10)*. That sacrifice, which could not make the conscience perfect though offerings were given daily, Christ fully set right with His own blood. Therefore the order in the text is clear. The blood of Christ cleanses the conscience, and the person who has been cleansed serves the living God. Do not reverse this order into becoming clean by serving.

The word that He will *"cleanse your conscience from dead works"* means that He saved us from all the sins that trouble the conscience. When there is sin in the conscience, a person is uneasy and tries somehow to soothe that conscience. He consoles himself that he is all right, and even invents a way of salvation different from the gospel. Christ did not soothe the conscience; He actually resolved sin and its punishment. Even for a born-again person, things that trouble the conscience arise, but now he can call on God and serve Him without avoiding Him like a sinner to be judged.

Undertaking more religious works because the conscience is uneasy, and serving with thanksgiving because one believes that Jesus has cleansed the conscience, differ in the basis of the heart even when outwardly the same things are done. The former looks at one's own labor, and the latter looks at the Lord, who sacrificed Himself for him. On what are you relying now as you serve God? If you are looking more at yourself doing the work than at the work God has given, first receive again into your heart the salvation by which He cleansed us.

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The High Priest, who made us people who serve

Let us read verses 11 and 12.

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."

On the Day of Atonement, Aaron went into the Holy Place with the blood of the offering for the people. Before that, he had to "*make atonement for himself and for his house" (Leviticus 16:6)* and then go in. It was because he was a person who needed atonement for himself as well. But Jesus Christ offered Himself without spot to God. The High Priest we need is the Savior who would have all our sins passed on to Him and resolve even their judgment. He Himself came.

Think of why the text says that Jesus accomplished eternal redemption with His own blood. The sins the Old Testament offerings removed were a day's worth or a year's worth of sins. The Son of God, who created us, came clothed in the body of a man, gave up His own life, and accomplished eternal atonement once for all. He died in our place before the justice of God, which demands the wages of sin. How could the person who believes in this sacrifice still be holding on, as his own portion, to a punishment not yet paid?

The Book of Hebrews does not speak separately of the laying on of hands at this point. It is because laying hands on the offering to pass on sin and shedding its blood were the basics of sacrifice to the Hebrews. Therefore, before that shedding of blood stands the baptism Jesus received from John. On the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament, God had the sins of the people passed on to the offering through the laying

on of Aaron's hands. According to that will, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body through the baptism He received from John. John the Baptist, the last high priest of the Old Testament and the representative of mankind, gave Jesus baptism, and the Lord received that baptism to fulfill all righteousness. The sins you and I commit throughout our lives, too, Jesus had passed on to Him at that time.

The baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross are connected, but they can be looked at separately. The former tells where our sins were passed on to, and the latter tells on whom the judgment of those sins was carried out. What made us without sin for all time is that baptism He received from John, and what freed us from punishment and made us bold before God is the blood of the Cross. Jesus, who had sins passed on to Him, died as the wages of those sins, was buried, and rose again from death on the third day. The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit is saved from all sins and becomes a child of God.

Do not think that Jesus took away sin but left the punishment behind. The One who had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John paid the price of those sins in our place on the Cross. When the Son of God received all that judgment on His own body, what reason is there for us to pay the price of sin again while serving God? Our service is not a sacrifice that fills in what is lacking in the Cross, but the thanksgiving of a person who has received the complete sacrifice of the Lord.

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At the very moment you discover your weakness, believe in the sacrifice of the Lord

Let us read verses 13 and 14.

"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Even the animals God appointed had the sins of sinners passed on to them, died in their place, and delivered people from the punishment of those sins. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without spot, cleanse us! When our conscience exposes our wrongs, look also at the punishment Christ received. When we think of the blood of Jesus each time our shortcomings come to light, we feel all the more grateful for that grace of His having received all the punishment.

If we stop at being ashamed of ourselves, we do not gain strength to serve. If we reckon only the fact that we ourselves are inadequate for preaching the word, we will always have to close our mouths and step back. The gospel we preach is not a story that we ourselves have lived more cleanly than others, but the news that Jesus Christ delivered us from sin. Even if the words and conduct of the person who has received the remission of sins are clumsy, the word he preaches is the truth. Even a person who knows his own weakness can preach the word of that salvation because he believes in the salvation the Lord accomplished.

Do not skip over admitting your own wrongs either. Examine wrong words and deeds in the light of the word, and if there is something you have insisted on, lay it down. And

confirm again that Jesus has already borne even that wrong exposed now. It is not that we can serve God only after serving out the punishment in full ourselves. Since we have already been saved from punishment, whenever we set our hearts anew, we can again do the work the Lord has entrusted to us with thanksgiving.

Hearing the word of God is also needed here. If we chew over only our own wrongs by ourselves, those wrongs easily take up the whole heart. Just as the priests, each time they went into the tabernacle of meeting, washed at the laver as the word said, *"Wash their hands and their feet" (Exodus 30:19)*, remember and believe every day that our sins were washed away once and for all through the baptism Jesus received from John. Believing every day in the salvation already accomplished and trying to accomplish atonement anew every day are different things. When we hear the word, even the dust that has settled on the already cleansed heart is cleansed.

How great a grace it is to speak of serving with a clean conscience! After finishing the work I need not calculate that I have covered my sins by my labor, and when beginning the work I need not doubt whether God would accept a person like me. We who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are people the Lord bought with His own life. That salvation makes us call on God today as well, hear His word, and set our hearts toward the work the Lord delights in.

Serve together with those cleansed by the same sacrifice

We do not serve the Lord alone. We gather with those who believe in the same gospel, worship, hear the word, and work.

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As we do so, we also see the weakness of others. The thoughts arise: I am striving, so why does that person speak like that? Why does he not do his own work properly? While believing that the Lord has remitted our own sins, we sometimes keep holding on to the wrongs of others.

On the Day of Atonement the high priest made atonement *"for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel" (Leviticus 16:17)*. The atonement of the high priest did not stay with himself alone but reached the whole assembly. Since Christ had the sins of all the people of the world passed on to Him, the sins of the brothers and sisters who serve beside us are also among them. If I know the reason I can serve the Lord though I am weak, I come to know that others, too, are not serving by their own perfection. We are all people who have received the grace of the one sacrifice the Lord offered.

Letting a person know his wrong is necessary. If one has taken on a task, one must do it responsibly, and if one has hurt another, one must admit it. Only, the purpose of speaking of a wrong lies in helping that person, too, believe in the salvation of the Lord and serve again with a bright heart. Admit, too, what you yourself have done wrong. If one thinks that one is always right and only the other person is the problem, one becomes a person who applies the sacrifice of Christ only to oneself.

When we are together with this faith, even doing the same work, the heart of service changes. There is no need to boast of one's own faithfulness or to make the failure of others into evidence. Remembering the grace of the Lord, who made me live, we come to hold precious those who serve together with us. The Lord cleansed us not so that each would establish his own righteousness, but so that we would serve the living God.

When we have long done the work the Lord entrusted to us, there are times when the body is weary. We meet people who do not easily listen even when we preach the gospel, and there are times when the results do not show in proportion to our labor. At such times, if we regard our service as repaying the price of sin, we cannot bear it. But if we believe the fact that the Lord has already saved us and, within that grace, has made us serve the gospel that makes people live, a reason for thanksgiving remains. Our labor is not the price that buys salvation, but the life a person who has received eternal salvation offers to the living God. Looking to the eternal rest the Lord will give, carry out by faith the work He has entrusted to you now.

Let the one who is trying to lay down the work of the Lord because he knows his own shortcomings believe in the Lord, who knew even those shortcomings and received the judgment of sin. Let the one who thinks he will be accepted by God only if his own labor is there also look at the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins with the blood of the Cross, rose again from death, and became our Savior. The conscience of us who believe in this salvation is already clean. Believing in the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without spot, let us serve the living God together with the brothers and sisters beside us. ✉

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Sermon 33 by Paul C. Jong

Faith that holds fast the promise even on days we are lacking

< Hebrews 10:19–25 >

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

On the day we come to know our own wrong clearly, there are times when we hesitate even to draw near to God. Though we heard the word, we spoke according to our own stubbornness, and while saying we love our brothers and sisters, we judged them in our hearts. Others seem to live well by faith, yet in us there are still such evil thoughts. On such a day, even our steps to gather at church grow heavy. If we say we give

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thanks, it seems we are hiding ourselves, and if we say we are lacking, it seems even our confession of having believed until now becomes false, so we would rather quietly step back a pace.

What do you hold on to at such a time? Today's text does not stop at *"let us draw near"* in verse 22, but continues to *"so much the more"* in verse 25. In between are holding fast the hope, considering one another, and not forsaking the assembling. And at the head of all these exhortations, it is written first where the boldness was obtained. It says it was obtained *"by the blood of Jesus."* Because it is not a boldness obtained as the result of our having finished a day well, even on the day we come to know our faults, its basis remains the same. The faith that gathers, holds fast, and considers one another even on days we are lacking comes from here.

The Lord has opened the way to draw near to God

Verses 19 and 20 speak together of the boldness to enter the Holiest and of that way. That way is the *"new and living way"* the Lord opened with His own flesh. But when you read the words *"by the blood of Jesus,"* do not think of that blood in isolation. Only when we first ask why Jesus had to shed His blood does the meaning of that blood come into view. For us, who could not enter into the presence of the holy God with sin, the Lord first did what He had to do before shedding His blood.

The Son of God came to this earth clothed in the body of a man. Jesus came to the Jordan River and received baptism from John, and through that baptism He had the sin of the world transferred onto His own body. Because He bore that sin, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, and received

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in our place the judgment of sin we were to receive. Here lies the reason we must put forward the baptism He received from John every time we speak of the blood. Jesus, who rose again from death, has given us who believe in this gospel a new life of living again. In the heart of the person who believes in that salvation the Holy Spirit comes and dwells.

In that sin of the world of which John the Baptist testified, *"Takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)*, your sins and mine are included. The pride and greed we discovered in ourselves today are also in it. The person who, before this word, realizes, "Even the sins I will commit until I die are within that sin of the world," does not step back from the Savior even on the day he has seen his faults.

Verse 18, just before the text, says, *"There is no longer an offering for sin."* So the person who draws near to God on the day he has come to know his wrong does not go to demand a new sacrifice from Jesus, but goes to believe in the salvation already accomplished.

Because the atonement is finished, we gather before God, who saved us, give thanks, and hear His word. We gather in order to believe together in the Lord, who paid the full price of salvation, and to live following Him. Do not try to wash away the sins committed daily by repeating prayers of repentance or by piling up your own deeds. What sets us before God is the atonement Jesus Christ accomplished.

The person who believes in the remission of sins can admit his own wrongs

Here there is something our hearts easily confuse. It is regarding the confession that we are the righteous who have

received the remission of sins and the claim that our deeds are perfect as the same thing. Then, the moment we admit a wrong, it seems the confession of being righteous will collapse, so we make excuses. Conversely, there are also people who doubt even the salvation of the Lord each time they see a wrong in themselves. Both thoughts are measuring the remission of sins by one's own deeds.

The righteous person is a person whose sins have disappeared through believing in the salvation by which Jesus had all sins passed on to Him and received their judgment in our place. Human deeds cannot always be perfect, so we often do wrong. Even so, because the word of God is perfect, the salvation He gave through that word is also perfect. So even on the day a wrong comes to light, salvation remains in its place.

Verse 22 says, *"Sprinkled from an evil conscience."* This realization of the evil of one's conscience does not end with one time, when we first hear the gospel. After receiving the remission of sins, a person rather comes to know his own evil more, and more deeply. So the believer often soaks his heart in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. It is confirming again and again that this washing of the body with pure water has already been accomplished.

Before the word to draw near with *"a true heart,"* we have no reason to dress up our appearance. It is because the Lord knew all our evil and saved us. When a wrong has come to light, put aside your own thoughts rather than adding explanations. The heart that lays down "This is what I think" and receives "This is what the Bible says"—that is a true heart.

If sin were washed away in proportion to how much we wept and agonized, salvation would depend on our emotions. The basis of the remission of sins lies in the baptism Jesus

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received from John and the judgment He received on the Cross. That said, this faith does not uphold as right even the evil words I spoke. If those words hurt a brother's heart, admit the wrong, and if your judgment was at odds with the word, throw that judgment away.

The apostle John, while exhorting believers not to sin, also makes clear the One to look to when they have sinned.

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:1–2).

John first says, *"That you may not sin,"* and then says, *"If anyone sins."* It is not permission to regard sin lightly. It is a word that lets us know who it is that stands on our side before the Father on the day sin comes to light. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, who became the propitiation for our sins. If I look only at my shame, I close my mouth, but if I believe in this Advocate, I can rise again even while admitting my wrong.

Eat together the food God has given

Verse 19 said that we have obtained boldness to enter the Holiest. The person who has entered the Holiest lives there in grace on the food God gives. But verse 25 warns against the habit of keeping oneself away from the place of that food.

"*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another"*

"*The manner of some"* is the thought that since one has been saved, one may now believe alone without gathering. But the life of faith cannot be lived alone. If one does not gather,

regarding one's faith as complete, one loses the strength of faith, and the way to help one another is also cut off. On the day a shortcoming has come to light, this habit arises all the more easily. If, ashamed to stand before people, one skips once, skipping soon becomes a habit.

When we gather at church, even a person who had no heart for it finds his heart gradually steeped in it as he sings praise, and as he hears the word, faith springs up and his heart is renewed. The food we eat at church is precisely this word. Each time we hear the word that Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and was judged on the Cross, that word becomes the food of salvation in our hearts.

In the place where the word is eaten, the hearing heart is important. If one acknowledges that one is a person who does not know the word of God well, one comes to listen to the words of those who knew and believed the truth before one did. For the person whose faults have come to light to sit before the word instead of keeping away from the church—that is what a person who has laid down his own righteousness looks like.

Conversely, there are also times when we stand in the place of seeing a brother's shortcomings. Do not regard that person as someone beneath you. We, too, are equally weak, people who live by the grace of the Lord. If that shortcoming does no great harm to the gospel, cover it, and for the parts that do not go well, teach, lead, and wait. If there is something to rebuke, rebuke with the word, but what is to be exalted in our gathering is, more than anyone's judgment, the righteousness of the Lord, who saved us.

Having once heard the word of salvation and rejoiced does not make today's food unnecessary. Just as the body lives only by eating every day, faith also lives only by eating the word

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every day. If we keep our own thoughts to ourselves, there is no way to discern whether they are right or wrong, so they easily harden further. Eat this food together within the church God has given. Do not starve yourself because a shortcoming has come to light.

Because we believe in the Lord, who promised, we consider one another

Verse 23 says, *"He who promised is faithful."* What did He promise? God long ago gave the law to make us realize our sins, and then promised a new covenant. And according to that promise the Son came to this earth, had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, hung on the Cross and died, and rose from the tomb and saved us. In the hearts of those who believe He has set His seal with the Holy Spirit and promised the kingdom of heaven. Since the Lord is One who does not lie, this promise is more certain than our circumstances.

The word *"hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering"* is also a word given to people who are lacking. Though we are lacking, we do not waver from that hope. It is because, though there are things lacking, we have fundamentally been born again, and God continues to love us, such as we are. Hope is looking toward something. If we live looking at the world, it is hard and gloomy, but if we look to the Lord, who saved us and is alive even now, what to hold on to becomes clear.

Verse 24 says, *"Consider one another in order to stir up love and good works."* It is a word among the righteous who have received the same salvation. A brother whose faith has

grown weak often already knows that he is lacking. What he needs is not to hear once more that he is lacking, but to open the word together and confirm what sins Jesus had passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. Let us spur on doing more of what is right, encourage living by faith, and set right the person going down a wrong path.

Verse 25 ends with *"so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* That Day is the day the Lord comes again. The same chapter says, *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37)*. Here lies the reason to strive all the more, the nearer that Day comes, both in gathering and in considering one another. The faith needed in the last days is the faith that believes with a true heart in Jesus Christ, who had our sins transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and received their judgment on the Cross.

The reason we can gather today, too, is not that we have become people worth boasting of every day. It is because there is the Lord, who saved us, lacking as we are, and because He who promised is faithful. Therefore, rather than striving to look like a person without blemish before others, receive the right word and share that grace together. The nearer the Day of the Lord's coming draws, even on days we are lacking, we hold fast the faithful promise and consider one another. ✉

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Sermon 34 by Paul C. Jong

The labor of serving the same gospel is precious

< Exodus 30:26–33 >

“With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests. And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘This shall be a holy anointing oil to Me throughout your generations. It shall not be poured on man’s flesh; nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition. It is holy, and it shall be holy to you. Whoever compounds any like it, or whoever puts any of it on an outsider, shall be cut off from his people.’”

The labor of the person who preaches the word is easily seen. But the hands of those who prepared what was needed so that the word could be heard are often not revealed. The work of polishing writings that contain the gospel so that they read well and sending them where they are needed is like that too. Even while doing these works together, we easily rank them in our hearts. We think that standing in front and speaking is

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precious and sitting behind and helping is less precious. Then the work we have taken on also looks small, and we easily forget the labor of others.

In today's text, God had the holy anointing oil applied from the ark of the Testimony to the base of the laver, to consecrate them as most holy. That anointing oil was not an oil made of one ingredient. It was a fragrant oil in which several spices were blended with olive oil according to the art of the perfumer. If we follow this oil, we see what makes the labor we have taken on precious.

To be used by God is holy consecration

The anointing oil is a holy fragrant oil made of the spices and oil God appointed. God commanded Moses to apply that oil to the articles He designated. The articles did not become holy by asserting their own worth. Because God said so, those articles became holy. Let us read verse 29.

"You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy."

What went into that anointing oil is written in the verses just before.

"Also take for yourself quality spices—five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty shekels), two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil" (Exodus 30:23–24).

Myrrh, cinnamon, cane, cassia, and olive oil, when each is by itself, are merely spices and oil. When God named them one by one, called them together, and made them one according to

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the art of the perfumer, they became the anointing oil that makes all the articles of the tabernacle holy. The work we have taken on within the church is like this too. At the place of preparing food, at the place of polishing writings, we do different work, but because God called us together to serve the gospel, we are used as one oil.

Holy consecration is not a decoration that makes us look like special people. The articles to which the anointing oil was applied did not show themselves off but gave off fragrance inside the tabernacle. God's consecrating us, too, is in order to make us belong to God and be used in His work.

The text says of this anointing oil, *"It shall not be poured on man's flesh,"* and says, *"It shall be holy to you."* Verse 33 speaks so sternly as to say that whoever makes an imitation of it or pours it on another person shall be cut off from the people. God did not regard lightly taking what belongs to God and using it as if for one's own household. It is not precious because we think it precious; it is precious because it belongs to God. If, under the words of serving the gospel, there is a heart that seeks to fill its own honor and greed, lay it down before this word.

Verse 29 says, *"Whatever touches them must be holy."* We who believed the gospel and received the remission of sins are used today like that anointing oil. Through the books of the gospel and the word we serve, the person who hears and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and becomes holy. So even if the work entrusted to you looks small, do not regard it as trivial yourselves. The One to be revealed in that work is Jesus Christ, who saved sinners.

The salvation of the Lord, who first made us holy

God did not consecrate only the articles. He also anointed Aaron and his sons with oil to consecrate them, and had them minister to God as priests. The making holy and the entrusting of the office go together. That we are able to serve God today, too, is because the Lord first saved us from sin.

Apart from faith in the Lord, we have no righteousness to put forward before God. The person who works well also sinned, and the person who has much could not escape the judgment of sin either. Nevertheless, God made such people as us holy and entrusted us with the office of priests. What a person who serves the gospel needs first of all is faith in the Savior, who removed all his sins.

The Son of God put on flesh like ours. To take the place of us who had to be judged fully because of sin, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Just as He said there, *"It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, through that baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sin of mankind passed on to Him.

And bearing that sin, He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and received in our place the judgment for our sins. Jesus overcame death and rose again, and He is our Savior, who is alive today also. Where is there anything more precious than this love that removed our sins forever? The person who believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins and becomes a child of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells in him. What made us holy is this salvation.

So there is no such thing as the remission of sins being more complete for a person who served much, or a little sin remaining in a person who served little. Whoever believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished obtains holiness. If we forget

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this fact, we count our own merits while serving, or become discouraged by comparing ourselves with others. Since the One who removed our sins is Jesus Christ, there is from the start no place to put forward our own labor as the price of salvation.

Because the salvation we received from the Lord is so precious, we want others also to hear and believe that salvation. This is why the person who has been made holy serves the gospel. However, a person's sins do not disappear by themselves just by meeting us. When he hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit we preach and believes it in his heart, that person also receives the remission of sins. Therefore there is no reason to boast of our own character or position as if it were the power of salvation, and our part is to preach accurately the content of the gospel that makes people clean.

The anointing oil, too, was made *"according to the art of the perfumer"* as God appointed, and, as He said, *"Nor shall you make any other like it, according to its composition,"* no one could change it by his own method. The gospel we serve, too, we preach just as God appointed it. Examine whether the books we make or the words we preach make plain, just as it is, the remission of sins Jesus accomplished by having the sin of the world transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John and by the blood of the Cross. What is to be kept before the size of our service is the gospel we believe and preach together.

We serve the same gospel with different gifts

The apostle Paul, while speaking of the worship of presenting our bodies to God, teaches the fact that there are different members in the same body.

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:3–8).

Paul says, *"All the members do not have the same function."* So it was with the spices of the anointing oil. They differed from the very quantity put in: myrrh and cassia, five hundred shekels; cinnamon and cane, two hundred and fifty shekels. God did not say to eliminate that difference, but had them gathered according to the quantities He appointed and made into one oil. Paul's word to think soberly according to the *"measure of faith"* dealt to each one sounds as if from the same heart.

The anointing oil is an oil made according to the prescribed method by gathering the ingredients together. If the spices remain apart, each in its own shape, the holy fragrant oil is not produced. Serving the gospel is like that too. Even in the one work of preaching the gospel in writing, the labor of many

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people goes in together. When those labors gather for one gospel, they become the fragrance of the gospel that makes people holy. If we reveal only one person's labor and erase the labor of others, we forget the method of God, who made one oil out of many spices.

When you see a person who has a gift God did not give you, give thanks. See him as a member who has taken on together the work you cannot do. As the word says, *"Not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,"* do not try to accomplish everything alone, going beyond the gift you received. God gave different gifts so that we might serve His will together.

The gifts that follow from verse 6 to verse 8 are not a ranking chart deciding whom to exalt more. They are an exhortation that, since there is grace received, we should actually serve with it. Do not miss the work entrusted to you while envying another person's work.

What unity needs, more than the same ability, is the same salvation and the same purpose. When people who received the remission of sins through the same gospel gather their hearts to serve one Lord, their different labors are used together for the gospel that saves people from sin. This is a far more precious thing than one person boasting of his own talent.

When we present our bodies, service becomes our life

After the anointing oil was made, it was applied to the articles and the priests and used. Fragrant oil disappears when it is poured out. We who believed the gospel also give

ourselves to serving that gospel. The apostle Paul speaks of that giving like this.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1).

It is a word to present *"your bodies."* If we only hold the thought that the gospel is precious while the body stays back, that service remains theory. The Lord wants to do His work on this earth today through our hands and feet.

Paul exhorts this presenting *"by the mercies of God."* It is a presenting by one who has already received mercy. He goes on to say, *"Do not be conformed to this world" (Romans 12:2)*. Not being conformed to this world and presenting the body to the work that pleases God—that is the life of faith. Even a person who cannot present everything because of family and circumstances presents the part he can.

In the life of serving the Lord there is also weariness. There is no one for whom it is not hard. The flesh has limits, so there are times when we grow exhausted, but at those times the Lord gives new strength, lets us rest, and bestows grace. Even those hours in which no name is revealed are hours used so that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached to people.

Even when we value one another's labor, let us not seek out only the person who did the conspicuous work. Let us value the labor of the person who bore his own share behind the scenes so that another member could finish the work that member had taken on. Throw away the thought that standing in front and speaking is precious and sitting and helping is less precious. When each serves the gospel in the place where he can serve, that labor is precious.

The apostle Paul said, *"For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who*

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are perishing" (2 Corinthians 2:15). In the tabernacle in which the anointing oil was applied, fragrance came from every article. The fragrance that should come from our labor of serving the gospel, too, is the fragrance of Christ rather than our own names. When that fragrance comes, it is a joy that another member is used, and it is also a joy that I help in that work.

The Lord first made us holy and had us used in His work. So do not lower the work you have taken on, nor put another person's labor beneath yourself. The labor of us who serve the same gospel is precious. As befits people whom God called together and uses as the holy anointing oil, present your bodies by faith so that the fragrance of Christ may come from the place entrusted to you today. ✉

Sermon 35 by Paul C. Jong

God, who gives wisdom to workers who are lacking

< Exodus 31:1–6 >

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you:”

Dear fellow believers, are there times when your heart is heavy even after finishing the work you have taken on? There are times when, though we somehow carried it out today, we have no confidence that we can do it tomorrow as well, and work that looks easy to others is nothing but hard for me. Service that we began at first with a glad heart comes to feel, before we know it, like work in which we must prove our own ability. Then we conclude that since I am a person who can do only this much, the Lord’s work also goes only this far.

To know that one’s own strength has limits is to know a fact. But when we begin to regard those limits as the limits of

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what God will do, our serving collapses. Today's text begins with the word of God, *"I have called by name Bezalel."* The One who sought out and appointed the workers to build the tabernacle was God. This word makes us see God, who gave him wisdom, before the skilled worker. Here lies the reason we do not lay down our serving even while admitting our lack.

God, who commanded the work, also gave wisdom

God called Bezalel and entrusted him with the work of the tabernacle. It was work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, and in carving wood. Because it was work of making actual things by hand, it could not be done by zeal of heart alone. He had to know what to make and how, and had to have the skill to accomplish it.

If we read the text slowly, we see who it is that works. Within these six verses, the word "I" appears four times. He says, "I have called Bezalel by name, I have appointed Aholiab, I have put wisdom, and I have commanded you." What Bezalel did is also written as *"to work in gold"* and *"to work in all manner of workmanship."* The hands were Bezalel's hands, but the One who made those hands work was God.

God filled him with the Spirit of God and gave him wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship. God, who commanded the work, also gave the wisdom to accomplish that work. If we look only at Bezalel's skill and leave out what God gave, we read the text backwards. The work of the tabernacle was, from the beginning, work that God ordered and God filled.

Verse 6 says, *"I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans."* It is a word that God puts wisdom in the

hearts of people who are already gifted. Even the gifted worked leaning on God, who gives. So the more accustomed we become to some work, the more the grace we have received should come into view. That a person who has done the Lord's work for a long time has been able to serve until now is also not so much because his will was firm, as because God bestowed grace upon grace again and again.

In the same verse God says, *"I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan."* The person to work together with Bezalel, too, God appointed. So lay down the thought that you must accomplish all the work alone to be worthy of the calling. God's command does not collapse because I cannot do it all.

Before this word, let us correct our judgment. Before saying, "I cannot, so this is as far as it goes," believe that God, who called Bezalel and filled him with wisdom, is the One who gives wisdom to us today as well. The wisdom needed for God's work comes from God.

We rely on the Lord, who gave the remission of sins, today as well

There are times when a strange division arises in our hearts. It is the division that we received the remission of sins by the grace of the Lord, but the life of faith after that must be the responsibility of my own will. But in the text, God, who *"called by name"* Bezalel, and God, who *"filled him with the Spirit of God,"* are the same One within one sentence. The One who called is the One who filled. He did not divide it so that God does the calling and Bezalel alone does the working.

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Think again about who it is that saved us. Jesus is not One who took away a little of our sins and left the rest to us. Jesus is God, and yet He came to this earth in the body of a man. And through the baptism He received from John, He had all the sin of mankind transferred onto Him all at one time. Because of the sin He bore in that way, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving our share of judgment without remainder. And on the third day He rose again and became the living Savior of those who believe.

Within the sins that were passed on to Jesus are not only the sins committed before believing, but even the weaknesses that come to light while living and serving after believing. We received the remission of sins not because we served more faithfully than others, but because we believed in our hearts in the salvation Jesus accomplished through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross. Before we worked for the Lord, Jesus completed the salvation for us.

Therefore, on a day when the work did not go well, do not place your own service on the scale of the remission of sins. A salvation in which one is righteous on the day one did well and becomes a sinner again on the day one did poorly is not in the Bible. Admit and correct your mistakes, but do not try to pay the price of that sin with more service. Believe that Jesus had even that mistake passed on to Him, and set it right honestly.

Would Jesus, who saved us so completely, leave us alone in the life after salvation? Jesus is not One who gave us only the remission of sins. The Lord gives realization, too, and the Lord gives strength, too. To the person who has received the remission of sins the Holy Spirit comes as a gift, dwells in him, and works in the midst of his life. The wisdom needed to serve the gospel is also with Him. Rely on the Lord, on whom you

relied when you were saved, before the work you have taken on today as well.

The remission of sins we received by believing in what Jesus accomplished once and for all, and the work of serving the gospel we carry out every day by receiving the Lord's help. The person who distinguishes these two holds on to salvation even on days he is lacking, and gives the credit to the Lord even on days he did well.

The branch abides in the vine in order to bear fruit

Jesus said:

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The branch bears fruit because it abides in the vine. Bearing fruit does not mean the branch keeps the vine alive. Jesus said, *"Without Me you can do nothing."* It is not a word that we come to fall a little short. So the time the branch must abide in the vine is not only the day its strength is gone, but every day it lives as a branch.

When we begin a work we seek the Lord, but once we become a little accustomed to it, it is easy to put our own judgment first. Even when a difficulty arises, rather than praying, we first try to solve it by our own strength, and only after our energy is all gone do we ask the Lord for help. But we are branches that live abiding in Jesus from the beginning. Lay the work you have taken on before the Lord and ask, "Lord, help me."

In the text, the wisdom was given by God, and it was Bezalel's hands that handled the gold, silver, and bronze, cut

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the jewels, and carved the wood with that wisdom. Here there is an order. First we ask and entrust it to the Lord, and then we move our hands with the wisdom He gave. Do not be ashamed, either, of hearing the explanation again, correcting what was wrong, and accepting the labor of others. The amount of our effort does not become a qualification to demand grace. We ask because we believe in grace, and we learn again and work because we look for His help.

From a heart that hides its lack to faith that asks for help

What lack are you hiding right now? Are you keeping your mouth shut, unable to speak of circumstances beyond your strength, for fear that if you say you do not know well the work you have taken on, you will look like a person without faith? Trying to protect yourself in that way, you also miss the chance to set the work right. The eyes of men can be covered for a while, but the eyes of God cannot be covered. Being able to see for oneself one's own blindness and nakedness is honest faith.

Hannah did not hide her circumstances. Even when she was misunderstood by the priest, she answered, *"Have poured out my soul before the LORD" (1 Samuel 1:15)*. That prayer, which revealed her lack and asked, the LORD remembered. Before God, our lack is not a blemish to hide, but the place that makes us ask for grace.

At times, the bigger worry is that things do not go according to one's own plan. While saying we want the gospel to be preached, we are at ease only if it is accomplished in the order I set and at the speed I expected. There are people who are gentle on the outside but whose stubbornness is firm on the

inside. What is needed then is, more than a stronger stubbornness, a heart that believes in what the Lord will do and waits. If, even after asking God for help, we make our own calculation the final judgment every time, our heart is still bound to our own strength.

To rely on the Lord is to believe the word needed today, to share our hearts with the church, and to wait for the Lord's help while doing the work given to me. We are not people who must produce the result ahead of the Lord. There is the Lord, who knows our lack and yet uses us in His own work.

I believe in the Lord, who entrusted the work, more than in my limits

At the end of verse 6 God said, *"That they may make all that I have commanded you."* In the verses that follow, the things to be made are written one by one, from the tabernacle of meeting, the ark of the Testimony, and the mercy seat, to the sweet incense for the holy place. And at the end of Exodus chapter 39, when Moses looked over all that had been finished, it had been done *"as the LORD had commanded" (Exodus 39:43)*, and he blessed them. The word *"that they may make all"* was fulfilled just as it was spoken.

From this word we learn the grace of God, who uses the worker, rather than measuring the size of the worker. That the tabernacle was built in full was not so much because Bezalel's skill was extraordinary, as because God, who commanded, gave wisdom and made them work to the end. The work we carried out yesterday, too, we did by grace, and the work we are to carry out today also needs that grace.

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Therefore, do not make the fact that your own strength has run out a reason to leave the Lord. Lay down your own strength, on which you have relied until now, and ask the Lord. Admit what you did wrong, learn what is to be learned, and bring before the church the difficulty you were holding alone. Jesus, who saved us, also gives the wisdom and strength for the work of the gospel.

Even if your hands are small, you can offer them to the Lord, and even if you do not know everything now, you can learn from the Lord. Lay down the heart that tries to take responsibility for everything by its own strength. God, who called Bezalel by name and filled him with wisdom, also brings to completion the work He has entrusted to us. Let us believe in God, who causes us to make all that He has commanded, and do the work we have taken on today, too, with the wisdom He fills us with. ✉

Sermon 36 by Paul C. Jong

Faith that rejoices when other workers grow

< Exodus 35:30–35 >

“And Moses said to the children of Israel, See, the LORD has called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship, to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship. And He has put in his heart the ability to teach, in him and Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. He has filled them with skill to do all manner of work of the engraver and the designer and the tapestry maker, in blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen, and of the weaver—those who do every work and those who design artistic works.”

A person who was serving the gospel together with us has, before we knew it, come to do the work well. The person who at first asked about everything one by one now carries out by himself the work he has taken on, and has grown enough to help others. It is a truly glad thing. But if, watching that, one corner of your heart becomes uncomfortable, let us ask ourselves. What have I been working for, hoping that it would

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go well? Did I want God's work to go well, or did I want the work to go only when I was always there?

Our hearts like praise that is seen. We want to be treated as someone who has worked a long time, and we even hope that work only we can do remains. But in today's text there is one more word that was not there when God appointed Bezalel and Aholiab in chapter 31. Introducing the two men to the people, Moses tells them that God *"put in his heart the ability to teach."* The wisdom God gave did not stay as one person's skill but flowed on to the building up of others.

We cannot see as a rival one who received the same salvation

To build up people to work together, we must first think of the salvation we have received. The Church of God is not a place where people of outstanding talent gather for one another's profit, but a place where people who received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit serve the same Lord.

Jesus, who is God, came clothed in flesh to save us. Through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, He had all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body, and as the price of that sin He shed His blood on the Cross and received the judgment of our sins in our place. And He was not held by death but rose again. We who believe in this gospel in our hearts are the righteous whose sins have all been washed once and for all, and God gave the Holy Spirit to these righteous people and sealed them as His own people. This righteousness Jesus accomplished has established us as the people of God who work together.

Within the sins that were passed on to Jesus are my sins and also the sins of the brothers and sisters who work with me, so the basis on which the one who learned first and the one now learning were made righteous is one. In the tapestry and weaving of which verse 35 speaks, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine linen were used. If we look at chapter 36 verse 8, those who wove the tabernacle with that thread were *"all the gifted artisans among them who worked on the tabernacle."* Both the one who taught and the one who learned built the same tabernacle with the same thread.

Therefore the very first thing in teaching is not skill at work but the gospel. Entrusting work first to a person who does not yet believe the gospel, to make him accustomed to the church, cannot take the place of the remission of sins. Let him hear and believe in his heart how Jesus had that person's sins passed on to Him and how the judgment of those sins was ended. If one only works for a long time without the foundation of faith being clear, the longer one works, the more only the outward form remains.

Also, even a person who has received the remission of sins does not do everything well immediately. There are people who have no sin but whose standards are still more their own thinking than the word. His salvation is perfect, but there are things for him to learn. Do not regard lightly the salvation he received because he does the work clumsily, nor think that there is nothing to teach because he has been saved. We establish clearly the faith of the remission of sins, and learn together what is needed for serving.

We do not preach the gospel in order to make someone a rival. We hope that he will rejoice within the same salvation and live believing in the Lord. If so, his growing and coming to serve the gospel together with us is also a thing to rejoice in. If

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he is a needed person while he is clumsy but becomes an uncomfortable person when he comes to do better than I, that is our greed. Let us turn that heart around, thinking of how Jesus loved that person.

God also entrusted teaching to the one who makes well

Bezalel could work in gold, silver, and bronze, cut jewels for setting, and carve wood, doing all manner of work. God gave him wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, and that ability was indispensable for the tabernacle. But the Bible does not stop there after speaking of Bezalel's skill. It says that God *"put in his heart the ability to teach,"* in him and Aholiab, and goes on to say, *"He has filled them with skill."*

In chapter 31 verse 3, the one He filled with the Spirit of God was *"him,"* that is, Bezalel alone. In chapter 35, together with the work of teaching, it says that skill filled *"them."* The work of teaching, too, was not a work a person began by making up his own mind, but a work God put in his heart. The work of teaching and building up people is therefore a spiritual skill. At times it leads from the front, and at times it supports from the side and makes one grow.

The fruit of that teaching appears in chapter 36 verse 1. Those who worked together with Bezalel and Aholiab were *"every gifted artisan in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary."* The two men taught, yet the Bible does not record the skill of those who learned as the merit of the two teachers, but records that the LORD made them know

how to do it. Through the labor of those who taught, God poured out wisdom.

So when a person I taught has come to do well, that is not a matter of my having been robbed of what was mine, but a matter of God having poured wisdom into him. The end of verse 35 closes with God having made them *"those who design artistic works."* That artistic work did not end with the two men but was carried on to those who learned. Only when the foundation is laid well now does another who makes well come forth among those who come after.

Therefore, do not regard letting others know the work you do well as a loss. When that person comes to do well, hands are added to carry out God's work together. Even if I do not step forward every time, the work for the gospel continues. There is no reason to worry that your own place will grow small while you share the wisdom you received from God.

From the labor of doing it for them to the labor of having them carry it out together

When helping a person who is learning for the first time, there is work I must do in his place. But if I leave that person to keep leaning only on me, it does not amount to having truly helped him. True help is building him up so that he believes the word and carries out by himself the work entrusted to him. The person who was receiving care grows into a person who cares for others.

For that, the one who teaches needs patience. The learner may ask again about something told to him once. The person who teaches well is not the one who says it once logically and is done, but the one who keeps on until the hearer understands

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it to the core. What we care for is not only the task but a soul saved together with us. Looking into what he has understood and what he does not yet know is also labor that serves the Lord.

That said, merely humoring his feelings is not care. Correct, with the word, thoughts that differ from the word, and if he has done the work he has taken on wrongly, let him know the part to fix. Helping him to know why he does this work and to carry it out believing in the Lord is the way to build him up in faith.

Nor should the one who teaches try to hold the learner in his own grip as he pleases. The One we follow together is the Lord. Teaching is leading that person according to the Lord's will, and if it becomes a matter of increasing those loyal to oneself, it turns into a matter of setting up one's own prestige. Build up people who believe the same gospel and uphold the Lord's will together.

Look at the person who has just learned and carries out a little of the work he has taken on. Rejoice in what he has become able to do, and help him with what he must still learn. There is grace God has given that person. A person who has grown receiving such consideration later remembers the help he received and does the same again for the person who comes after him. The work of the gospel is carried on in this way from person to person.

To build up another, I must lay down even my being right

In chapter 36 verse 1, the list of those who received the word that they *"shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded"* begins with the names of Bezalel and Aholiab.

The two who taught were also under the same command together with those who learned. For the workers of the tabernacle, the standard was not the way of the one who teaches but the word the LORD commanded.

We, too, must not place our own judgment above the word merely because we have done it for a long time. A familiar method and right faith are not the same thing. The method of working can be learned and corrected in order to carry it out better, but the truth of salvation that must be preached cannot be changed at our convenience. The gospel we are to teach is the news that Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, and received the judgment in full on the Cross because of that sin. Explain it so that the learner can understand it easily, but do not take away from its content.

We must also be honest when we come to know that we explained something wrongly. If the one who taught admits first, "Yes, I had it wrong," the learner also learns how to correct himself before the word. If we insist to the end that what was wrong is right in order to save face, we teach human stubbornness rather than faith that follows the word.

The learner, too, needs the same heart. Do not hear every exhortation as interference just because you already do other work well. The person who asks what he does not know and answers "Yes" to the word he has heard grows. Setting right what one learned wrongly is not a matter of losing faith, but a matter of correcting one's own thinking because one believes the word of God.

When learning from one another, ask together what is according to what He commanded, rather than who was right. Among people who ask in that way, there is no reason to push

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away a person to work with in order to hide a wrong. It is because Jesus had even that wrong passed on to Him.

A fellow worker's growth is a joy for us to enjoy together

Keep in your hearts the word that says God had Bezalel and Aholiab teach. Working with the ability one received and sharing what one received to build up people to work together are connected. Do not turn the wisdom God gave into a tool for becoming the only person who is needed.

If you have thought of another worker's coming to do well as being robbed of your own share, lay that thought down. God repays each person according to his labor, and has us share together the fruit we reaped together. What we are to keep is, more than our own name, the gospel we believe together, and what we are to rejoice in is, more than someone continuing to need me, that the Lord's salvation is preached and that person grows in faith.

You who learned first, share what you know. You who are learning, hear the word and master the work you have taken on, and help yet another person. Each time the worker beside us comes to know how to do one more kind of work, that is a matter of the LORD having poured wisdom into him. God, who put it in the hearts of Bezalel and Aholiab to teach, is Himself today building up the workers growing beside us as well. ✉

Sermon 37 by Paul C. Jong

Receive the gospel you heard with your own faith

< Hebrews 4:1–11 >

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: 'So I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,' although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'; and again in this place: 'They shall not enter My rest.' Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, 'Today,' after such a long time, as it has been said: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."

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Hebrews chapter 4 is a word spoken to people who have already heard the gospel. Yet there are people who, though they heard the same gospel, are just as afraid as at first in the face of the problem of their own sins. When they hear the word that Jesus has saved us, they say it is right, and when another person rejoices at having received the remission of sins, they rejoice together. But when they think about their own sins, they regard that salvation as still insufficient for themselves. So they look for what more they must do to set their hearts at ease. What such a person needs—is it adding something to the Lord's work, or believing with his own heart the word he has heard?

Hebrews asks, not of the person hearing the gospel for the first time but of the person to whom it has already been preached, what profit that word has been. The text tells in a word the reason the word they heard did not profit them. It was that the word was *"not being mixed with faith"* in the hearers. Receive today with your own faith the salvation the Lord accomplished. The rest God gives is enjoyed by that faith.

The mere fact of having heard the promise does not give rest

Let us read chapter 4 verse 2.

"For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."

The same word that was preached became rest to one person and did not profit another. The word had power, but the hearer put his own thinking ahead of God's promise and did not mix faith with that word. So, though he was near the word,

the help God bestowed remained, to the end, someone else's portion.

"Mixed" means blending together what each side needs and receiving it as one. On God's side there is the will He has set toward us. It is the will to save us completely by sending the Son, having Him take our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, and having Him receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross. On our side there is the condition of sinners who absolutely need that salvation. For these two to meet, and for us to agree, "Yes, that is right. If You do that for me, my sins disappear"—that is mixing faith. If we receive only what we understand in the word and push away the rest, the mixing does not take place. When we receive the word He promised just as it is, in full, that word becomes mine.

Who are *"them"* in verse 2? Verse 6 calls them *"those to whom it was first preached."* The people of Israel in the wilderness heard, through the system of the tabernacle, that the Savior to come would take on sin once and for all and be judged. But they did not obey and so did not enter the rest, and remained people who were always working, bringing sheep and oxen. Verse 8 says that even though Joshua brought them into Canaan, he could not give them rest. However excellent a man may be, a man cannot give true rest to men; only the word God promised gives rest.

What Jesus did is, before being a work for others, a work precisely for me. Faith is one's own matter, which neither parents nor children can take care of in one's place. The person who thinks, "I am more evil than others, so I cannot receive this salvation," and the person who thinks, "I have done better than others, so I may rest assured," are both looking at themselves. We are not sinners because we committed some

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sin, nor do we become acceptable people because we did not commit some sin. The gospel makes us hear and believe what the Lord did for us.

Do not listen lightly to the *"let us fear"* of verse 1. Hebrews fears lest there be, among the crowd who heard the gospel, someone who did not receive that word into his heart. Even if one is outwardly together with those who believe, if one did not believe in the heart, in that heart there is neither rest nor the Holy Spirit. This fear is not a word telling us to doubt the Savior, but an exhortation that, since the promise still remains, we should truly believe that promise. Do not rest assured merely because you are in the place where the word is heard, but believe in God, who promised.

Who is the One who sanctifies me?

After God had told Moses the whole pattern of the tabernacle, He commanded that the Sabbath be kept and said this.

"Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you" (Exodus 31:13).

In this word, the One who sanctifies is the LORD. God did not tell the people to produce holiness and bring it, but made them know that He Himself is the LORD who sanctifies them. The white fine linen hangings surrounding the court of the tabernacle also show that holiness. The fine linen speaks of the holiness of the believer together with the holiness of God. A person who is lacking and weak and sins every day cannot reach that holiness by deeds. We became a holy people by

believing in the salvation God appointed. If we place the basis of holiness in our own deeds, on the day we did well we seem righteous, and on the day we did wrong we seem to have become sinners again, so we cannot rest for a single day.

Admit honestly that you have sin. We were not people who were a little short, such that only a little help would do. We were people from whose hearts evil thoughts came out, who spoke and acted according to those thoughts, and who had to receive the judgment of sin before God. Nor did we have the strength to remove those sins by ourselves. To the person who admits this fact, God's salvation does not sound like someone else's story, but sounds like the word that gives me life.

The Lord gave salvation as a gift to such people as us. If we have anything to boast of, it is this one thing: that Jesus Christ saved us, who could only go to hell, from sin. Our peace does not come from our deeds having become perfect, but from the fact that the salvation of the Lord, who delivered me from sin, is perfect. So knowing well and admitting one's own lack and believing that the Lord has sanctified me do not conflict with each other.

Faith does not leave with me the sins the Lord bore

Then what is the salvation with which we must mix faith? Sins do not disappear by believing in Jesus unconditionally as the Savior. We need the faith that knows and believes how Jesus had our sins passed on to Him and received their judgment. The Son of God came in the body of a man, and, in a body without sin, went out to the Jordan River and received baptism from John. There Jesus said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*.

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The baptism Jesus received from John was not a rite that had nothing to do with us. Just as the sacrifice of the Old Testament received the laying on of hands and had the sins of men passed on to it, Jesus, receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, had the sin of the world transferred onto His body. So the next day John pointed to Jesus and testified, *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).*

To mix faith is to confess this fact as one's own matter. "I was a person who would go to hell because of sin, but Jesus had my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. The Lord received on the Cross in my place the judgment I was to receive." Acknowledging this in the heart is faith. Even when we have done wrong again today, this confession does not change. The Lord, who fulfilled all righteousness at the Jordan River, at that time took on even this sin of today.

Jesus, who bore the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. He actually received in our place the judgment we were to receive. Because He bore the sins through the baptism He received from John, He paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and from the tomb in which that body was buried He rose again on the third day. The person who has mixed faith with this gospel of the water and the Spirit is a righteous person whose sins have all been washed away, and in his heart the Holy Spirit dwells.

Therefore faith goes one step beyond praising from afar what the Lord did. It is receiving into the heart that Jesus had my sins, too, transferred onto Him, received the judgment of my sins, too, and saved me.

Believe the word that one ceases from his works

Let us read chapter 4 verse 10.

"For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His."

Then what are the "*works*" of our own from which we cease? The work a person clings to without rest is the labor of trying to wash away his own sins. If he thinks sin remains, he holds on to prayers of repentance and fasting as methods of atonement, and makes even good deeds, service, and evangelism into means of filling up the lacking price of salvation. Since he cannot know how much is enough, there is no rest. The person who believes the gospel that Jesus has washed away all my sins ceases from that work he was doing to remove sin.

Verse 10 speaks of our ceasing "*as God did from His.*" Verse 4 says that God "*rested on the seventh day from all His works.*" Because God had accomplished all He intended to do, He stayed His hand and rested. Jesus, too, said on the Cross, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)*, and Hebrews says that after Christ had offered the sacrifice for sins He *"sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12)*. If the Lord had left the work less than finished, we would have to add something, but the Lord did not leave a single sin behind. To rest by faith is not a matter of forcibly erasing the thought of sin, but of believing that Jesus had that sin passed on to Him and received its judgment.

Resting does not mean regarding sin lightly. Clearly admit that a wrong is a wrong, and turn back according to the word. Only, do not try to remove by your own effort that sin you admitted, but confirm how, on the Lord's side, He resolved that

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sin. Jesus, who received baptism from John and shed His blood on the Cross, has already resolved even that sin.

Our flesh is still weak even after we are saved, and it sins. But that weakness is not a sign that the Lord's work is less than finished. The Lord bore, through the baptism He received from John, even the sins committed through the weakness of the flesh, and was judged on the Cross. Each time a lack comes to light, do not try to establish your salvation again from the beginning, but let your heart rest within that grace.

Believe today the word you heard today

Verse 11 exhorts, *"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest."* This diligence is not a word telling us to strive and produce our own salvation; it is *"lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."* The obedience of receiving the word we heard just as it is, is the way to enter the rest. So the person who has already entered the rest is diligent to lead into that rest the person who has not yet come in, and the person who has not yet entered is diligent to hear the right gospel.

Verse 7 borrows the writing of David and says *"Today"* twice. *"Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts."* The word of God is always heard by us in the present tense. It is not that, having believed once, we now need not believe; every day we acknowledge and believe the word heard today. The heart that holds firmly to its own judgment and pushes away the word is a hardened heart.

Do not put it off, saying, "I will believe when I have become good enough." Nor attach the condition that you will acknowledge the remission of sins only when your heart is

deeply moved. Faith is receiving as fact what the Lord has already accomplished through the baptism He received from John and the Cross. If there is something you do not know, you can learn it, and if you have come to know it, you can receive it. Since it is not that the word becomes true only after we have first changed, we can believe today the word of salvation heard today.

Do not hide your own heart behind the thought that you know the gospel. Confirm before the word whether what you are leaning on is the work of the Lord or your religious life. The peace obtained through religious life dries up before long, and then one must do something again. The rest you need is with the Lord, who remitted sins. Withdraw the heart that was holding its own sins apart and only looking at the Lord's salvation, and receive that salvation as your own salvation.

We heard the gospel not in order to watch the news that other people have been saved, but so that we, too, may receive the remission of sins and enter the rest. The LORD, who sanctifies you, has already accomplished that salvation in full. Mix your faith with the gospel you heard today, and cease from your own work of trying to remove sin, as God did from His. ✉

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Sermon 38 by Paul C. Jong

At the end of our labor there is the Lord's rest

< Exodus 31:15–17 >

"Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

< John 14:1–3 >

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

God said to keep the Sabbath and called it *"a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever."* This rest is first something given to our hearts today. Because Jesus has removed all our sins, the person who has received the remission of sins is not shaken because of sin, and his heart

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rests. And that rest leads on to the eternal rest we will enjoy together with the Lord on the day the labor of this earth ends. The end Jesus has prepared for us is not endless labor but rest to be enjoyed together with Him.

If we forget this rest even while serving God's work, all that comes into view is doing today again what we did yesterday, and doing again tomorrow what we did today. Then the reason for our labor grows dim, and it is easy to forget, too, why the Lord has placed us on this earth. The grace of the remission of sins lets our hearts rest now, and the eternal rest the Lord promised becomes the hope that lets us endure today's labor. Let us hold on to these two rests together and look toward the life that remains to us.

What awaits us is the rest of living with the Lord

Jesus spoke to the disciples of the place in the Father's house. To the exhortation *"Let not your heart be troubled,"* He attached the reason. Jesus promised that He would prepare a place for them, and come again and have them be where He is. If the disciples had had to secure by their own strength a place to go, how much would there have been to be troubled about? But because it is a place Jesus prepares, they could believe in Him and wait.

The blessing of rest lies more in our being together where the Lord is than in there being no more work to do. We live together with the One who had our sins passed on to Him and gave us life. We, who had only heard of the Lord's love, enjoy eternal life and joy together with Him. So great is the promise given to us who have received the remission of sins.

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We have not yet seen all the glory of that kingdom. Even so, because it is clear who made the promise, that promise does not grow faint. Jesus, who gave up even His own life to deliver us from sin, said this. He prepares it, and He receives us. The certainty of the final rest does not depend on how precisely we can picture the future, but on how faithful the Lord, who saved us, is.

The Bible speaks like this of what it will be like when God dwells with His people.

"And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.'" (Revelation 21:3–4).

Now our bodies grow weak, sorrow visits our hearts, and we go through the pain of parting and death. But none of that continues forever. The rest given to us is different from a rest in which we forget our labor for a moment and then return to the same fears. It is eternal life in which God Himself is with us and wipes away our tears.

God, who spoke of the tabernacle, also gave rest

On Mount Sinai God told Moses the pattern of the tabernacle one by one. And at the end of that long word, of which chapter 31 verse 18 says *"when He had made an end of speaking,"* He placed the Sabbath. After showing the way to draw near to God, He spoke of the grace of resting in God.

Verse 17 says that God made the heavens and the earth in six days and on the seventh day *"rested and was refreshed."* Rest and peace are bound together. Making the heavens and the earth and resting was something only God could do. So is removing our sins and giving rest to the heart. That is God's part, which man cannot assist in. And God called this Sabbath *"a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever."* A sign is a mark. The mark that we have become the people of God is believing in the rest God has given.

What is that rest? It is the heart that now no longer weeps because of sin and no longer trembles for fear of being judged before God because of sin. God showed through the tabernacle the way sins are washed away, accomplished that salvation in Christ, and has now given this rest to our hearts. The rest we will enjoy together with the Lord in the future also stands on the same salvation. A person who must receive the judgment of sin cannot take possession of God's house by his own strength.

Jesus Christ came clothed in the body of a man to save us. When He received baptism from John at the Jordan River, He had the sins of a lifetime, which we commit from the time we are born until we enter the grave, transferred onto His body. Because He had taken those sins upon Himself in that way, He shed His blood on the Cross and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. And He rose again from the dead and is, today too, the Savior of those who believe. We who believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit are children of God whose sins have all been washed away, and the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts. The rest of our hearts comes from this salvation.

Verse 15 is stern. *"Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."* If one tried to keep this word to the letter, there would be nothing one could put one's

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hand to except breathing, so no one would survive. What God blocked with this word is the labor of man trying to wash away again by his own strength the sins already removed. Trying to wash away sin by living a good life, by giving much in almsgiving, is working on the Sabbath. The remission of sins is God's part, to be left to God. Since the Savior's work was finished before we served, do not count our labor as the merit of salvation.

Verse 16 says that the children of Israel *"shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant."* To hold on by faith, all the while we live on this earth, to the remission of sins received by believing once is to keep the rest. Even on the day a shortcoming comes to light, if we believe that Jesus had even that sin passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, that rest is not shaken. As the words *"throughout their generations"* say, whoever among those who come after us also knows and believes this truth becomes one of the people of God who enjoy the same rest.

There is work left for us who have received rest

When we receive the remission of sins, among the labors we did before there is one we must stop. It is the labor of striving to wash away our own sins. But verse 15 begins with *"Work shall be done for six days."* Even for the person who has received rest there is six days' work to do diligently. God did not immediately call us who are saved away but left us on this earth, entrusting us with the work of serving the gospel so that others, too, may know that salvation. The person who used

to live trying to remove his own sins now lives preaching the gospel of Jesus, who removed sin.

Beside us there are people who, still bearing the burden of sin, fear death and judgment. A person without rest in his heart cannot say to another, "Believe in Jesus and obtain peace." It is only the person whose own problem of sin is ended and whose heart rests who cannot pass by another person's problem of sin, and who hopes that that person, too, will come to believe the gospel that gave him rest.

The way of doing that work differs from person to person. There are those who preach the word directly, and there are those who lend a hand from behind so that the word may be preached. Do not regard the work entrusted to you as small by comparing it with the work of others. The purpose of letting one soul hear the word of salvation is the same.

We are those *"created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:10)*. The same verse says that those works are works *"which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."* The labor that we who have received the rest of the remission of sins do on this earth is also work God prepared in advance.

Do not regard repeated service as wasted time

There are times when the days of serving the gospel look like the repetition of the same work. We preach again today the word we preached yesterday, and prepare again this time the work we prepared last time. At such times the life of serving may feel dry and dull. But that dryness usually comes not so much because there is much work as because we forget the

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purpose for which God entrusted this work and other thoughts enter the heart.

The gospel is always the same gospel. Since there is nothing to make anew in the salvation Jesus accomplished, the word we preach is also the same. Even so, the same gospel is not in vain. This gospel belongs to God, so it does not perish, and the more it is preached, the newer it is. When we hear again this time the gospel we heard before, it becomes food for the heart. God had Israel, who had crossed the Jordan, set up twelve stones, and said that those stones *"shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever" (Joshua 4:7)*. He had them tell the same story again each time their descendants asked.

Do not measure service by how enjoyable it is. Think of who is enabled to hear the word of salvation by the labor you added today. Though the person who prepares the gathering where the word will be heard is not noticed, at that gathering one person hears the gospel. The labor of examining a writing to be sent out is quiet, but someone reads that writing and comes to know how his sins were washed away. Even if we cannot see all the results at one time, the purpose of serving the gospel is clear.

With only a heart that drives oneself, one cannot endure long. The person who knows that rest is waiting at the end asks again, when one work is finished, "Lord, what shall I do now?" Because he knows that rest, he obtains comfort and a sense of fulfillment even in a today that repeats the same work. And that strength comes from the rest of the remission of sins already received in the heart. It is not that we make God a gracious God by being zealous; we serve gladly because we believe in God, who has already bestowed grace.

See the Lord's promise as greater than the present suffering

The apostle Paul looked at present suffering like this.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Paul did not say that there is no present suffering. He said that suffering is real, but that, set beside the glory to be revealed, it is not worthy to be compared. Paul carried on his work, finding comfort in that great rest. We, too, must not measure the Lord's promise using hard circumstances as a ruler. The present difficulty cannot take away the eternal life and glory promised to the children of God.

If we look at the labor before our eyes, the end looks far away. But there is the place Jesus has prepared for us, and there is the day He will receive His people. To wait for that day is to believe in the One who promised and entrust today to Him. When the time comes, the Lord will surely fulfill what He promised.

Because there is the rest to be enjoyed together with the Lord, we do not see today's labor as all there is at the end. Jesus, who loved us, saved us from sin, and made us His own people, will welcome us at the end as well. The comfort obtained while serving comes less from the work becoming easier than from the faith that the Lord, who saved me, the one who labors, leads me to the end.

Do not change or dim the salvation the Lord gave, but keep that gospel just as it is and serve. When your heart grows dry, think again how great are the rest of the remission of sins already given to you and the rest you will enjoy in the future.

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The One who promised the eternal kingdom is our Lord even now.

Our end is not labor and weariness. In the Father's house that Jesus has prepared is the Savior who will receive us. That rest has already begun today in our hearts. Enjoying this rest received in our hearts today through the remission of sins, let us hope for the great rest the Lord will give at the end of our labor. ✉

Sermon 39 by Paul C. Jong

God, who leads us even on days we remain

< Exodus 40:34–38 >

“Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”

On the days the cloud was not taken up, the people of Israel did not set out. Even after the tabernacle was completed and the glory of God filled it, they had both days of setting out and days of remaining. God was with them, but there were times they had to remain. The Bible does not say that God’s guidance came only to the people on the days they set out. The people who remained in the camp, waiting for the cloud to be taken up, were also beside the tabernacle where He dwelt.

We easily think that God helps us only when the work moves forward quickly. If a way opens immediately after we pray and there are visible results in the work we serve in, we

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believe He is with us. Then, if our circumstances remain the same though we strive, our hearts waver. We wonder what we have done wrong for the Lord to have grown distant, and whether the work we are doing now is useless. Before we know it, today's results become a greater standard of judgment than the word God gave.

Dear fellow believers, look at the cloud that stayed above the tabernacle. Even on the days the cloud did not move, that cloud showed that God had come among the people. Here lies the purpose for which God had the tabernacle built. It was to dwell through that tabernacle in the midst of the congregation of Israel and to be their God. Even on the days the way ahead does not look open right now, believe that God, who saved us from sin and made us His own people, is with us.

God was there even under the cloud that was not taken up

Let us read chapter 40 verse 37 again.

"But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up."

The people did not set out until the day the cloud was taken up, but stayed and lived there. This verse does not calculate for us how long they remained. Instead, it clearly shows what they set out and remained according to. They followed the timing of God's leading. What mattered to them was going together with God, rather than moving faster than others.

Even Moses, who had finished setting up the tabernacle, could not enter it. Verse 35 makes the reason clear: it was because the cloud rested above the tabernacle of meeting and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Because a light

and majesty not to be seen in the world covered the tabernacle, even Moses could not enter it carelessly. Moses set up the tabernacle, but the Master of that house was God, who dwelt in its midst, and the One who led the way was that God as well.

Keep this order in your hearts. If we think that since I believe in God, God must fulfill my plans, then each time a plan is delayed, faith also collapses. If we believe that God saved me and leads me within His own will, we can ask Him even at times when things do not go as I think. Here lies the reason we, who do not know all that lies ahead, rely on God. The Church of God is a place God Himself leads.

In verse 38 it is recorded that all Israel saw the cloud by day and the fire by night. In the wilderness, by day they needed shade to block the scorching sun, and by night they needed fire to keep off the cold. God covered the whole camp with the cloud to give shade, and by night placed fire in the midst of that cloud and protected the people. That fire was real fire, and it was the evidence that God was with the people who lived centered on the tabernacle. It was not a secret known only to one leader, either. All the house of Israel saw it with their own eyes throughout all their journeys.

We, too, have days when our faith grows weak and we feel we do not know whether God is working. Even on such days God was covering the tabernacle with the cloud. When the day grew dark there was fire in the midst of the cloud, and even on the days the camp remained, the cloud was above the tabernacle. The cloud that was not taken up was not a sign that God was far away, but a sign that God was right there in that place.

Today the very same cloud as then does not stand before our eyes. We have the word that testifies of the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. Through that word we know how God

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made us His own people. The more impatient your heart, the more you should hear that word of salvation every day. Do not count only how much you lack, but look back in faith at what God has given you.

God, who washed away our sins, walks with us

Here there is something we must ask first. How did the holy God dwell in the midst of a weak people? While the people of Israel lived in the wilderness, did they sin much, or little? They sinned much. To such a people God gave the law of sacrifice by which to receive the remission of sins at the tabernacle. Through the sacrifice in which the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed on his sins, and that offering died in his place, He let them know the way to escape the judgment of sin. God gave the way to wash away sin, and walked with the people cleansed by that way.

If we miss this fact, we come to regard God's being with us as a reward for our own faithfulness. We think that because we did well today God is near, and because we made a mistake today God has abandoned me. Then the basis of faith moves from the word to my conduct. We, who can neither be comforted by lowering the holiness of God nor receive Him by making our flesh perfect, need the Savior who actually washed away all our sins.

Jesus accomplished that work. Jesus Christ, who is God, came clothed in the body of a man and received baptism from John the Baptist, who represented mankind. Just as the sinner of the Old Testament laid his hands on the head of the offering and passed on his sins, Jesus had all the sin of the world transferred onto His own body through the baptism He

received from John. What Jesus said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, was also a word spoken concerning this work. The righteousness of God was not fulfilled by calling someone righteous while leaving sin covered over. It was fulfilled by Jesus, who received the sins and took them away, paying the price of those sins Himself.

With that body Jesus hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and received the judgment of sin in our place to the end. And on the third day He rose again. Therefore the basis for believing in the remission of sins lies not in how blameless I am today, but in the fact that Jesus had all my sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and ended that judgment on the Cross. With the faith of our hearts we are united to Jesus' bearing our sins when He received baptism from John, His dying on the Cross, and His rising again.

Does sin still remain in your hearts? If you believe that Jesus Christ had all your sins transferred onto His body and was judged in your place, you are the people of God, the same as that people who pitched their camp around the tabernacle. Just as the people of the Old Testament received the remission of sins through the sacrifices of the tabernacle, today we have truly received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who believes this gospel in his heart is a righteous person who has received the remission of sins.

If we do not know the Savior, who had our sins passed on to Him, with what faith would we live holy lives, and with what faith would we receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts? God dwells by the Holy Spirit in those who have received the remission of sins by believing this gospel, makes them the Church of God, and there unfolds His own will. Just as the tabernacle was in the middle of the camp of Israel and the

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cloud stayed above it, God is also among His saved people today. This is the basis on which we believe in His walking with us.

Let us not forget the Lord, who is with us, while looking at our circumstances

Even after receiving the remission of sins, our hearts are captured by our circumstances. We are discouraged when what is needed to serve the gospel falls short, and when we work with our strength combined yet the expected results are not seen. At such times only the abilities we lack and the blocked way loom large, and the fact that God has saved us and is even now working together with the church grows small.

The people of God are not people who live by their own strength, wisdom, and circumstances. They live together with God, in accordance with God's will, by the blessing God gives. God led us, who were each in different circumstances, into the church, and after bringing us in He has us cut off those circumstances and live relying on God. If you have come to know that our strength falls short, bring it before God rather than giving up. Ask the Lord, who entrusted the gospel to us, for the faith, the wisdom, and what is needed to carry out that work.

Verse 38 says that those who saw the cloud and the fire were *"all the house of Israel."* One cloud covered the whole camp, and under it the people remained together and set out together. Holding a difficult matter alone and clinging only to one's own thoughts does not help faith. When it is hard, pray, and consult with brothers and sisters who hear the same word. Do not fight alone, either, but fight united. Receiving the help

of other members is also the grace by which the Lord has us live together.

Of Moses, who set up the tabernacle, the Bible records, *"According to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did" (Exodus 40:16)*. Moses did not put his own thinking first but carried it out just as commanded. The servants and people of God, whatever their circumstances, do what God is pleased with and has commanded. Do not miss the work of faith you can do today while looking only at the big unresolved problem. We are not masters who force results into being, but people who do the work God has entrusted to us.

Also, do not change the gospel you preach because of an impatient heart. When Israel offered sacrifices centered on the tabernacle and listened to the words of God's servants, they overcame even in difficult circumstances. But from the time they changed and corrupted the law of sacrifice of the tabernacle, they collapsed. What we are to hold on to today is also that very truth of salvation which made us clean. The method of preaching we can discuss and add labor to, but the gospel of how Jesus washed away sin through the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross we preach just as we received it.

Above the people who remained, too, there was the cloud. Let us not miss God, who is with us, while looking only at the speed of the work. Faith is not saying that the problems before our eyes have all been solved, but trusting the Lord, who saved us, and following His will even when there is still much to ask for. God will surely help with this work and surely accomplish it. Do today's work relying on Him, who leads His own people.

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The Lord promised to be with us to the end

Jesus, who rose again from death, in entrusting the disciples with the work of preaching the gospel, did not send them out to carry it out by their own strength alone. These are the words the Lord Himself spoke.

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen" (Matthew 28:18–20).

The One who has all authority promised to be with us. The One we believe in and rely on is not One who only watches our zeal from afar. He is the Lord, who is with the people He saved from sin and preaches His own salvation through them. In the Old Testament it was the tabernacle, but in this age God is with, and works together with, the Church of God, which believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Do not reduce that promise to a word valid only when we do the work well. Because the Lord is with us, even we who are lacking serve, learning as we rely on Him. If your heart is weary, hear the word and gain new strength. If there is something you judged wrongly, do not be stubborn but set it right.

Exodus does not end with the image of a people who have finished the whole journey. It ends with the image of the cloud of God staying above a people who still have a way ahead to go. God walked with that people and at last brought them into the land of Canaan. More important than the fact that a way remains is the fact that there is God, who goes that way

together with us. That God has helped us and brought us this far, and will lead us until the day the Lord comes.

Before you, too, there will remain matters whose answers you do not yet know. Even so, we know clearly who it is that saved us. Jesus had our sins transferred onto His body through the baptism He received from John, received their judgment on the Cross, and rose up again from the place of death. That Savior is with us. When it is time to set out, let us follow by faith, and when it is time to wait, let us rely on the Lord by faith. God, who covered the whole camp in the wilderness with the cloud by day and the fire by night, keeps and leads His own people, whose sins have been washed away, on the days they remain and on the days they set out. ✉

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Sermon 40 by Paul C. Jong

The fullness of Christ revealed through members who are lacking

< Ephesians 1:20–23 >

“Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Even while serving the gospel, there are times we regard the work we have taken on as trivial. The labor of the person who preaches the word looks precious, but our own labor of preparing and helping from behind so that that work may be accomplished feels like nothing much. We think, “I just do it because I am in the church, because I am told to.” Since we cannot speak as well as others and have no ability to take on big work, we regard ourselves as people whose presence or absence makes no difference to the church. So some withdraw their hearts, and some go around looking for conspicuous work in order to have their worth recognized.

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One thing is missing from this kind of thinking. It has forgotten whose body the church is. It looks only at my ability and measures only the size of the work I can do. The work of the church is the work in which Jesus Christ, as the head, makes us who have received the remission of sins His own members and accomplishes His will.

Today's text calls the church the body of Christ and says it is *"the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23)*. This fullness does not mean that each of us is equipped with every ability. The One who fills all things is Jesus Christ. He fills this world with salvation through the love of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and He does that work through the church, His body, that is, through us who have received the remission of sins. The church preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world—this is the fullness the text speaks of. So even the person who has taken on a small part must not look at his labor as separated from Christ.

The head of the church is Christ, who overcame death

Before the word that the church is the body of Christ, Paul records that God raised Christ from the dead. And he relates that He seated Him at the right hand of God in the heavenly places and set Him far above all principality and power. That authority is what the Father gave to the Son. Verse 21 says that His name is above every name that is named *"not only in this age but also in that which is to come."* The King who will rule and protect us in the age to come as well is Jesus Christ.

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People commonly remember Jesus only as a pitiable One who hung on the Cross. But His receiving baptism from John and shedding His blood on the Cross are the footsteps by which He saved us, and Jesus, having finished all that work, is now King over all things. It is precisely He who is the head of the church. He is not One who, like us, calculates what He can do and gives up His purpose when strength falls short, but the Lord who rose again from death and is above all things.

Let us read chapter 1 verse 22.

"And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,"

God put all things under the feet of Christ, and gave that Christ to be head of the church. If all things are under His feet, we, His body, also obey Him, the head. The church is not a gathering that stands only to the extent of the talents a few excellent people have. The Master of the work entrusted to us is Christ. The Lord, who is already above all things, has made us His own body.

Therefore, if you want to know the labor of the church, first ask the will of the Lord, the head. Jesus wants to save sinners and make them children of God, and wants the gospel of that salvation to be preached to others also. For those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit to receive that will as their own will and uphold it together is the service of the church. Whatever we have taken on, when we labor knowing this purpose, my work is joined to the work of Christ, the head.

When a man tries to become the head, problems arise. Where sinners gather, a man becomes the chief and plays the king. Such people try to decide everything by whose word is stronger, whose career is longer, and who has labored more, and they take even the help of other members as the interference of people beneath them. The office was not given

to lord it over others but to serve. The person who believes in Christ as the head lays down his own thoughts before the word. He examines together whether his own plan is profitable to the gospel, and if another member has a gift that is needed, he asks him.

Exodus records that after the tabernacle was fully set up, *"The glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34)*. That glory did not come in order to have people boast of a tent made by man, but came in order to make known the God who dwelt in its midst. As He said, *"I will dwell in them And walk among them" (2 Corinthians 6:16)*, God today dwells among the people who have been saved. So when you look at the church, do not have your heart captured first by the size of the building or the names of people. See what Jesus Christ has accomplished among us and what salvation He causes to be preached through us. Then, even in the labor of people who are lacking, you see the glory of God.

What made us members is the remission of sins the Lord accomplished

Then who are the members belonging to the body of Christ? This question cannot be answered by the fact that one has attended the chapel for a long time or has taken on much work. The church is the gathering of people called out from the world. God first delivered us from sin and made us His children, and gathered those children and established the church. The Church of God is the place where people who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit gather and serve the Lord.

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Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth to save us from sin. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had the sin of the world passed on to His own body. Bearing that sin, He received the judgment of sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rose again from the dead and sat down at the right hand of God. Within the sin of the world Jesus had transferred onto Him are all the sins of each and every one of us.

This is precisely the righteousness of God the Bible speaks of. It is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist in order to have our sins passed on to His own body, and the blood He shed on the Cross. The person who believes that this righteousness is revealed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes the body of Christ. Into the heart of the person who believes this gospel God pours the Holy Spirit as the guarantee that he has been saved from all sins and has become a child of God. We became members not thanks to doing the work well or committing fewer sins, but because we belong to Him by believing in the salvation the Lord accomplished.

But knowing this gospel in the head and believing it as the remission of one's own sins are different. There are people who, even while explaining that Jesus received baptism from John and died on the Cross, regard sins not yet washed away as still remaining in their own hearts. The anxiety of heart of such a person is not covered over by taking on more work. Believe in your heart that your own sins, too, are within all the sins the Lord bore. If there are people in the church who know the gospel only in the head, even the preaching of the gospel can be blocked.

First believe that gospel. Jesus had all the sins I commit in my whole life transferred onto Him through the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment of those sins on

the Cross. There is nothing we must do in order to be saved. Because we have been saved, work arises to preach that salvation. Serving is not the price that buys the qualification of a member, but the way a person who already belongs to Christ takes part in the work the Lord is pleased with.

This faith also makes clear what the church stands on. In the gatherings of the world one becomes a member even with sin in the heart, but in the Church of God the members are people who have washed away the sins of their hearts through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The standard that distinguishes the Church of God is not the number of people or the building, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit. What the church is to preach is also that very gospel which made us righteous.

The labor of each member reaches one soul

Think about our bodies. A thought the head has judged right is transmitted to the chest, and the chest commands the arms and legs to move. The body does not move as it pleases but moves as the head directs. The church, the body of Christ, is like that too. When the will of Christ, the head, is transmitted to the whole body, and the members attached in their different places move according to that will, the gospel reaches one soul. The hand that preaches the word and the hand that moves and carries that word differ from each other, but they are used together in the work of the same gospel going to one person.

God works through His own body rather than through a few people of outstanding talent. So He made it so that the work of the gospel cannot all be done by one person. If one person could do it all, the glory would go to that person and that

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person would hold the work in his grip. God did it this way in order to have all the members take part in that work. So there is not a single saint the church does not need.

Verse 23 calls the church *"His body."* Our body, from the hair of the head to the tips of the toes, is all attached to the body, and even a single hair attached to the body is precious because it is a member of the body. Jesus Christ and His church are one body that cannot be separated. The fact that one did not preach the word directly does not make that labor a matter outside the body. Think of the fact that when the work you have taken on is properly carried on, one person comes to hear the word of salvation. The work the church does is the work God does, and the work our hands, attached to that body, do is also included in it.

So do not make the gift you have into your own glory. If one part of the body tries to act as the head, the whole body goes awry. Rather than determining who is the greater person, help one another so that the gospel the Lord gave may be preached more clearly.

If one small part of the body goes wrong, the whole body suffers together. If within the church the faith that believes in Christ as the head grows dim, all the members suffer together. At such times, do not hide one another's shortcomings or shift them onto others, but join forces and set that faith right with the word. When people who have received the same salvation uphold together the will of the Lord, the head, that body grows.

The joy of the person who serves the fullness of Christ

Where do we see the fullness of the Church of God? Would we look for it in many people praising us? Would we look for it in each of us coming to have an appearance lacking in nothing? We see it in Jesus Christ, the head of the church, having His own salvation preached, and in those who believe that gospel obtaining the remission of sins and new life. When one person receives the remission of sins, the love and salvation of God, the grace of His having made him a child, and the blessing of His taking him to the kingdom of heaven come upon his heart. This work accomplished within that person is fullness.

We are the people who received this fullness first. And through us, who have received the fullness, God distributes the love and blessing of God to the people of the whole world. You are taking part in the work of that gospel being preached to others. See by faith how your labor is now used for the gospel. And giving and receiving the help that is needed, unite your heart with the church.

As we serve together, there are also times when our own righteousness is exposed and broken. We thought we were better than others, yet we make mistakes, and it seemed things could not go on without me, yet another member carries it out better. Do not let go of the work of the gospel just because your own righteousness has been broken. The reason the Lord works through us is not that we have flawless ability, but that our hearts are clean through believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even when we are broken down and our righteousness is shattered, the person called for the gospel praises God.

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If Jesus had only saved us and then left us alone afterward, what would have become of us by now? Because God knows us so very well, He made us members of the Church of God and placed us within it. He made it so that another member fills what I lack, and I, too, can fill what he needs. When in that way one soul receives the remission of sins, the Lord's having saved that soul becomes the joy of the whole body. This joy that arises in the heart when we do the work of the gospel is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is within us.

Christ, who rose again from death and is above all things, is the head of our church. After saving us, He did not leave us scattered to live by our own strength alone, but made us members of one body. Gladly carry out the share entrusted to you, and value the labor of other members. Receiving as your head Christ, who made us, lacking as we are, His own body, preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world and reveal the fullness of Him who fills all things. ✉

◇ About the Next Series

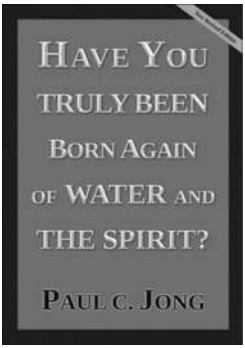
The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

News about newly released books, as well as various ways to access them—including eBooks (PDF, EPUB), audiobooks (M4A, MP3), and online reading—can be found at **www.bjnewlife.org.**

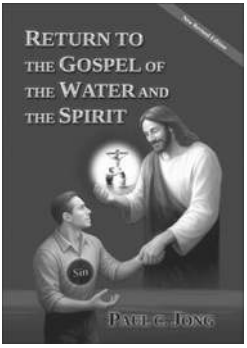
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

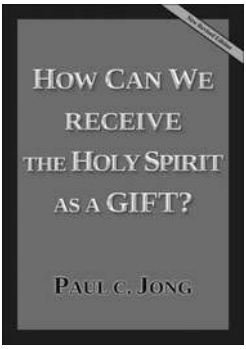
RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

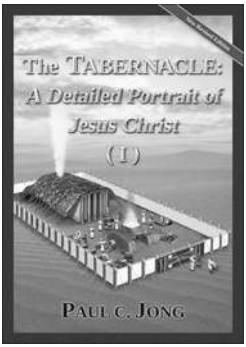
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



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]



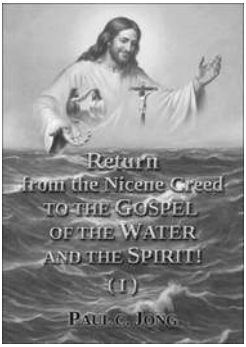
How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

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.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

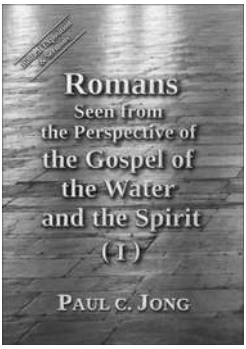
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

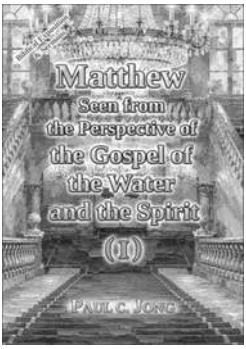
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



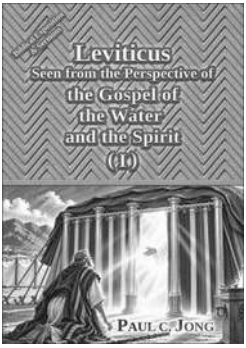
Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

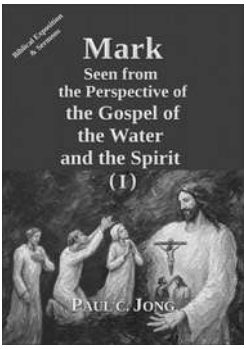


Leviticus seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) examines how the Old Testament law of sacrifice prefigures the salvation of Jesus Christ, looking at the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering, as well as the consecration ceremony of the priests, Aaron's first sacrifice, and the incident of Nadab and Abihu.

The author, Pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and in this book, he also explains the eternal atonement Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross, connecting it to the sacrifices of Leviticus.

How can a sinner be made sinless? This book gives a clear answer to that question through the Bible.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

John Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



John seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I) is a book that examines, through the entire Gospel of John, how the Word, who is God, came to this earth clothed in flesh and saved sinners from sin.

The author, pastor Paul C. Jong, has long preached, through the word of the Bible, "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" that Jesus Christ completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. This book does not explain the signs and words of the Gospel of John as mere knowledge of the Bible or records of miracles, but guides readers to the faith by which they are saved from sin and obtain everlasting life by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

May everyone who opens this book meet Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible testifies, and obtain true life.

Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)

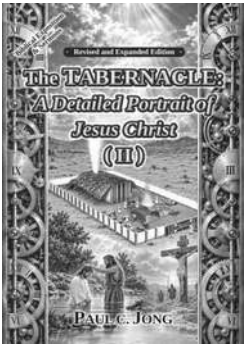


"Luke Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (I)" expounds the Word from Luke chapters 1 through 6 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Each chapter is composed of three parts: Biblical Exposition, Questions and Answers, and Sermons. The central message conveyed by this book is clear. Salvation is not accomplished by human goodness or merit. Rather, Jesus, who is God, received the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross to pay the price for those sins, and rose from the dead, thereby giving complete salvation from all sins to those who believe in this truth.

Pastor Paul C. Jong of The New Life Mission is a servant of God who has devoted his life to preaching the true gospel. Through the Word he preaches, this book will lead souls held captive by sin to the joy of the remission of sins and to eternal life in Jesus.

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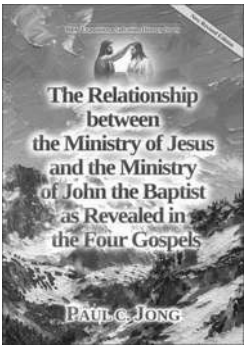
The TABERNACLE: A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (3-Volume Series)



God had the tabernacle set up in the wilderness in order to dwell among the people He had delivered out of Egypt.

Through the Biblical Exposition of Exodus chapters 25–31 and the sermons on the tabernacle, this book conveys the heart of God, who wants to make His sinful people holy and keep them near. The promise of salvation contained in the tabernacle was fulfilled when Jesus had the sin of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of that sin by shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again. Looking into the utensils and sacrifices of the tabernacle and the office of the high priest, we come to know the meaning of the remission of sins received by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and of the eternal atonement. Through the tabernacle, we seek to know God's love for us and to share the joy of living together as His people.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels [New Revised Edition]



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

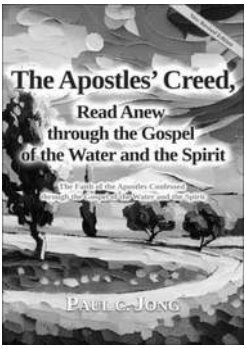
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

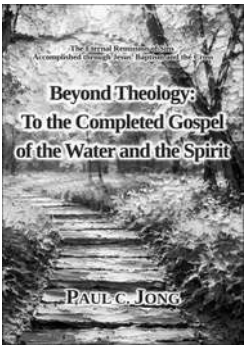


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

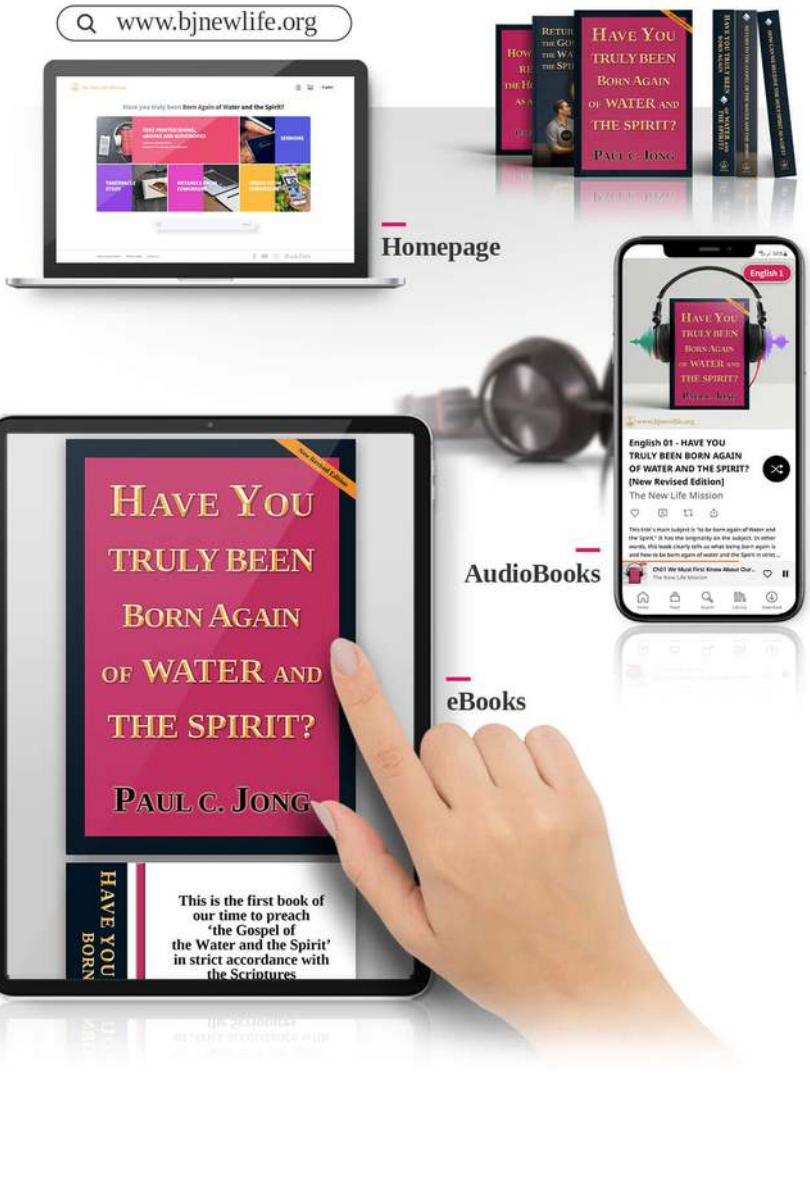
This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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Our The New Life Mission is distributing Pastor Paul C. Jong's spiritual books in 'printed book' form through coworkers who have been born again by water and the Spirit.

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Please help us spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ through our books so that more people can be born again of the water and the Spirit. We would also be grateful if you could introduce our website and books to many people and invite them to visit.

THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org



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Sincerely,
The New Life Mission



Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

For 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 continue to be published and have been translated into more than 110 languages, reaching readers in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available free of charge at www.bjnewlife.org, while paperback editions can be purchased on Amazon.

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

Relying on what should we, who have received the remission of sins, live?

The word of the tabernacle teaches the way to believe in the Savior, who washed away sin, and to live by that grace. This book urges us to receive the gospel we have heard with the faith of our own hearts, and to live by that faith even in a life in which weakness is revealed.

Jesus, who is God in His essence, had all the sins of our whole lives passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John. He paid the price of those sins by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and rose again from death to become the eternal Savior. The heart that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit finds rest within this completed salvation.

The laver teaches the assurance of the washing of sin, and the table of showbread and the altar of incense teach the life of eating the word and praying. The boards connected to one another and the lampstand made of one piece of gold show those who believe the same gospel serving with united hearts.

This book examines together everything from the faith that receives the remission of sins to the prayer that entrusts the worries of life, the life of the priest who cares for souls, the labor of preaching the gospel, and the hope of eternal rest. Following the word contained in the tabernacle, I hope you will know more deeply and rely on God, who saved us and leads us by grace every day.

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