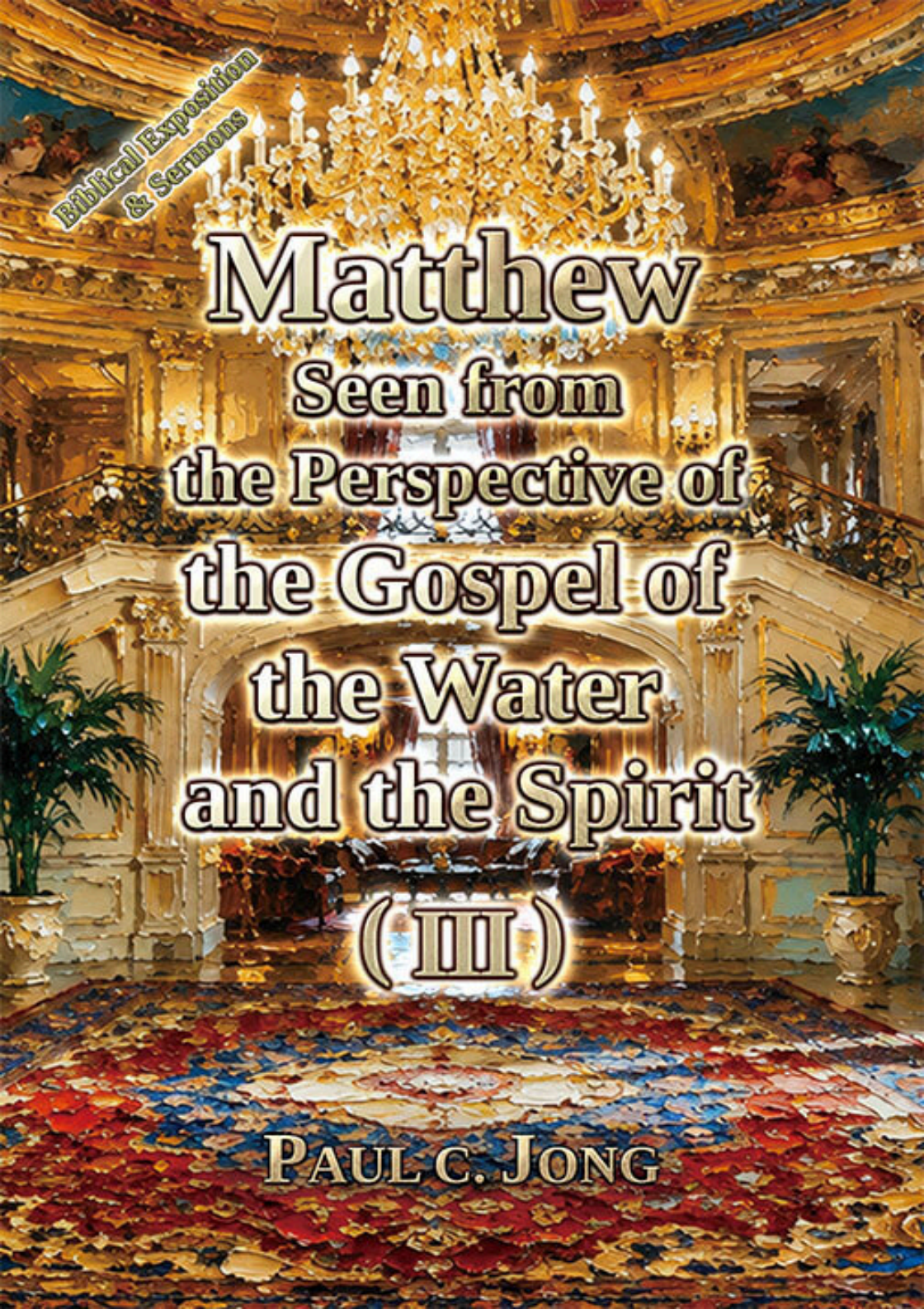
Biblical Exposition & Sermons
Matthew
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(III)
Paul C. Jong

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

Biblical Exposition & Sermons

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"For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matthew 9:13)

Jesus does not call those who think they have righteousness of their own, but those who know that they are sinners before God.

The Lord took on all the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and then rose again, accomplishing the perfect remission of sins. Therefore, the sinner comes to God not by religious sacrifices or his own merits, but by believing in this salvation the Lord has accomplished.

Through this book, may its readers meet the Lord who had compassion on sinners and fulfilled all righteousness, receive the remission of all their sins within the gospel of the water and the Spirit and obtain true rest, and realize the preciousness of the gospel that He has shown and entrusted to them.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

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

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

PAUL C. JONG



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Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (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.

PAUL C. JONG

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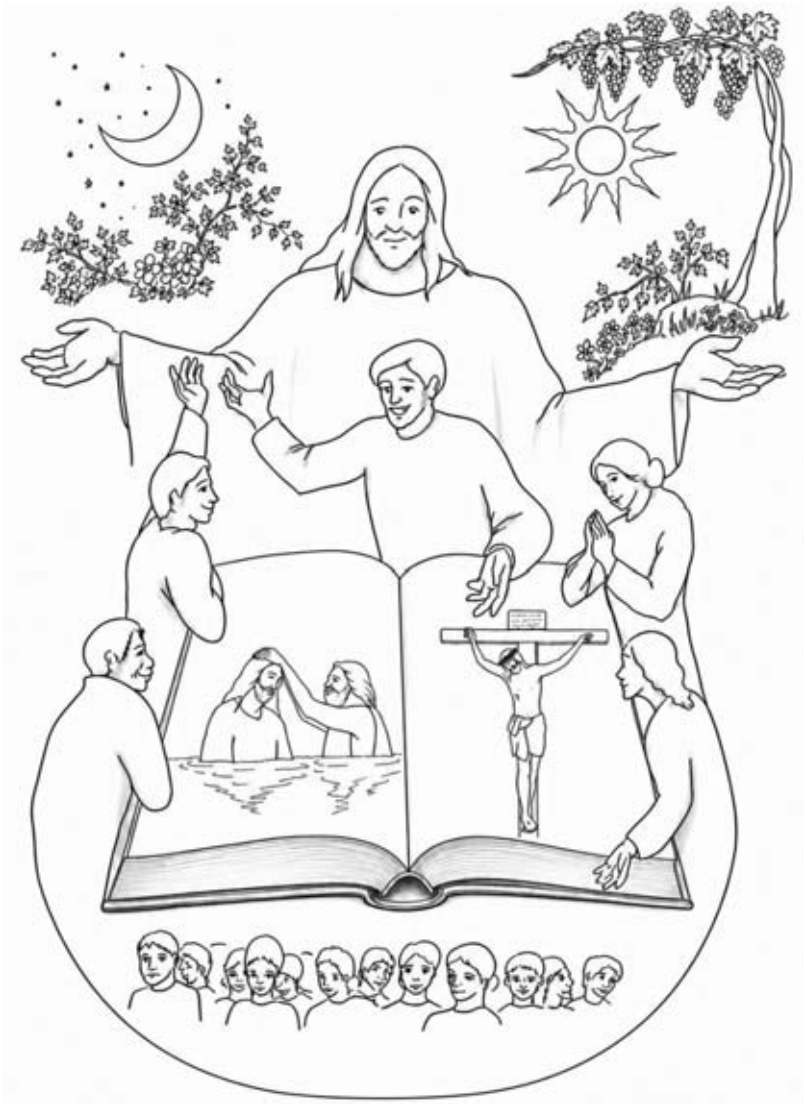

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Preface

Matthew chapters 9 to 13 show that Jesus Christ is God who has the authority to remit sin, and the Savior who rules over the power of sin, disease, demons, and death. Jesus had compassion on those sick with sin, raised up the twelve disciples as workers of the gospel, and through many parables taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and showed what kind of heart receives the word of God. But the more clearly Jesus' word and power were revealed, the fiercer grew the opposition and slander of the religious leaders.

This book is the third Bible study book expounding Matthew chapters 9 to 13 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. These five chapters show that believing in Jesus does not lie merely in acknowledging His miracles or agreeing with religious teaching. True faith is admitting that one is a person sick with sin, receiving with the heart the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished, and, after receiving the remission of sin, preaching the gospel and bearing the fruit of faith.

The remission of sin and the mission of the gospel that Matthew chapters 9–13 convey

Matthew chapter 9 begins with Jesus proclaiming the remission of sin to the paralytic. People expected first the healing of the body's disease, but Jesus made plain the fact that man's most fundamental problem is the sin of the heart. The power that raised the paralytic testifies that Jesus is not a mere

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healer but God who has the authority to remit sin.

Jesus called Matthew the tax collector as His disciple and ate with sinners. The Pharisees criticized this, but Jesus said that the sick need a physician rather than the healthy, and that He came to call sinners. This does not mean that He tolerates sin; it means that He came to save from sin the person who admits his sin and seeks God's mercy. And through the parables of the piece of unshrunk cloth and the new wine, He taught that the new life of the gospel cannot be attached to a religious life centered on human works.

His healing of the woman with the flow of blood, His raising of the dead girl, and His healing of the blind and the demon-possessed reveal that Jesus is the Lord of life who rules even over the power of disease, death, and evil spirits. Jesus had compassion on the multitudes who were weary and scattered like sheep without a shepherd, and, saying that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, He had them pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.

In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus gives the twelve disciples power and sends them out as workers of the gospel. The disciples preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, healed the sick, and cast out demons. That power was not the disciples' own but was given by Jesus. The power we need today also is not the power to display fleshly miracles, but the power to bring to life and heal souls sick with sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus told the disciples to give freely what they had freely received. Since the remission of sin and the gospel are not obtained by money or human merit, the worker of the gospel does not make them a means for his own gain. He seeks out the souls who will receive the gospel, delivers the word of salvation without price, and serves so that they may stand firm in faith.

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On the way of the gospel there is not only welcome. Because of the gospel, the disciples could be dragged before councils and rulers and be hated even by their own families. Even so, they do not hide or distort the gospel out of fear of men. Since the Holy Spirit gives the needed word and God cares for His own people, the true disciple puts Jesus and the gospel before the profit of the flesh, and takes up the cross the Lord has entrusted and follows Him.

Matthew chapter 11 teaches the mission of John the Baptist and the right faith that receives Jesus. John the Baptist, shut up in prison, did not send his disciples because he doubted Jesus. He sought to hand his disciples over to the Lord so that they would meet Jesus directly, realize that He is the promised Messiah, and become Jesus' disciples. Jesus also testified that John the Baptist is more than a prophet, and the greatest among those born of women.

John the Baptist was born in the family of Zacharias the priest and carried out the office of the last prophet of the Old Testament and the last High Priest representing mankind. Representing mankind, he baptized Jesus, and Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. John the Baptist afterward testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Therefore, if one disregards his mission, one cannot realize when and through whom Jesus took on the sin of the world.

Jesus rebuked Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, which saw His word and power and yet did not repent. The truth is hidden from those who trust their own wisdom and righteousness, but the truth of salvation is revealed to those who receive the word like little children. The rest He gives to those who labor and are heavy laden is also the rest of soul in which

the person who tried to wash away his sins with his own works and repeated prayers of repentance believes the salvation Jesus completed and escapes from condemnation.

Matthew chapter 12 shows the true meaning of the Sabbath and the stubborn faith that opposes Jesus. The Pharisees held to the form of the Law but did not know the mercy of God who gave that Law. Jesus made plain that He is greater than the temple and that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. True rest does not come from outwardly keeping the regulations of a particular day, but is obtained in Jesus Christ, who has completely removed the burden of sin.

The Pharisees slandered Jesus' healing of the demon-possessed man by the power of the Spirit as the work of the ruler of the demons. It was not that they could not believe for lack of evidence; with stubborn hearts that refused to receive Jesus, they opposed the work of the Spirit. The sign of Jonah reveals that Jesus would die, be buried, and rise again. True faith is not continually demanding visible signs, but purely receiving the written word of God and the salvation Christ accomplished.

Matthew chapter 13 records the parable of the sower and many other parables concerning the kingdom of heaven. Jesus sat in a boat by the sea and spoke to the multitude on the shore. The parables reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and at the same time distinguish the person who believes and understands the word from the person whose heart is hardened and who hears without understanding. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are granted to the person who lays down his own thoughts and purely receives the word of God.

In the parable of the sower, the seed is the word of the kingdom, and the four kinds of ground represent the states of heart of those who hear the word. The heart like the wayside does not understand the word and is robbed of it by the wicked

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one, and the stony ground, having no root, stumbles before tribulation and persecution. The thorns bear no fruit because the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, but the good ground hears the word, understands it, and bears abundant fruit. The gospel of the water and the Spirit also puts down its roots in the heart that lays down its own thoughts and religious stubbornness and receives the word just as it is.

The parable of the good seed and the tares shows the fact that in this world the word of truth and the false words Satan has sown exist together, but at the last they are clearly distinguished. The treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price mean that Jesus Christ and the kingdom of heaven He has given are more precious than anything in the world. The parable of the dragnet teaches that at the end of the age God will divide the righteous and the wicked. Therefore we do not remain in the mere knowledge of the gospel, but believe it with the heart and receive the remission of sin, and regard the gospel as most precious and bear abundant fruit.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven show how the word of the kingdom, which at first looks small and feeble, grows with the power of life and spreads far and wide. By contrast, the people of Nazareth knew Jesus only in a fleshly way and rejected Him, and so they did not believe His word. We do not treat the word as familiar knowledge, but receive it as the word of life God has given.

The rest and the power obtained within the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The word of Matthew chapters 9 to 13 shows how Jesus Christ saved sinners and how the saved live by faith. The sinless

Son of God came as the eternal High Priest of mankind. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had all the sins committed by mankind from Adam to the last day of the world passed on to His own body once and for all. And carrying those sins, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead, becoming the eternal Savior of those who believe.

The baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are one work of salvation that cannot be separated from one another. The Cross is not the place where the sins of mankind were first passed onto Jesus, but the place where He was judged for the sin He took on at the Jordan River. The Holy Spirit testifies that this salvation is the perfect righteousness God has accomplished, and gives the remission of sin and new life to the person who believes this gospel. This is the true rest enjoyed by the person who has escaped from the fear of sin and judgment.

This gospel is the seed of life sown in a person's heart. The person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel does not labor again to achieve salvation by his own works, but neither does he do nothing and live only for himself. He freely delivers to other souls the grace he has freely received from the Lord, has compassion on those wandering without a shepherd, and overcomes by faith the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, living as a worker who bears the fruit of the gospel.

The structure of this book and how to read it

This book first surveys the overall flow of each chapter of Matthew 9 to 13, and then explains the meaning contained in the

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verses and expressions from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It then includes questions and answers with which to confirm and organize the word learned, and sermons that help apply that word to actual faith and life.

Dear readers, first read slowly the Bible text of of each chapter. Then, through the exposition of the text, survey the flow of each event and parable; check what you have learned with the questions and answers; and then read the sermons, applying the word of God by faith to your own heart and life.

I believe that all who read this book will not stop at knowing Jesus merely as One who healed diseases and worked miracles, but will come to believe in Him as the true God and Savior who took on and removed all sin. All readers will lay down their own wisdom and righteousness, receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit with a heart like a little child, escape from the heavy burden of sin and condemnation, and hear and understand the word of the kingdom with a heart like the good ground, bearing abundant fruit.

And I believe that after receiving the remission of sin, they will have compassion on the souls wandering without a shepherd, will not be ashamed of the gospel before any hardship, and will live as workers who deliver to the whole world the word of life freely received from the Lord. I believe and earnestly pray that they will become the spiritual family of Jesus Christ who believe and do the will of God the Father, and will bear the yoke of the gospel together with the Lord and remain faithful to the end.

All the glory I give to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has saved us from the power of sin, death, and Satan through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

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CHAPTER

9

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Matthew Chapter 9

< Matthew 9:1-38 >

“So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.’ And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, ‘This Man blasphemes!’ But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’—then He said to the paralytic, ‘Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.’ And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men. As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, ‘Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard that, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’ Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your

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disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.' While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land. When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their

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eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, ‘See that no one knows it.’ But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, ‘It was never seen like this in Israel!’ But the Pharisees said, ‘He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.’ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’”

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 9 clearly testifies that Jesus is the Messiah who rules over the power of sin, disease, death, and demons. Jesus did not merely display His power; He had compassion on sinners, on the sick, and on the multitudes wandering without a shepherd. At the same time, the chapter draws a sharp contrast between the people who believed in and followed Jesus and the religious leaders who saw the same works and yet slandered Him.

1. Remitting the sins of the paralytic and healing his sickness (verses 1–8)

People brought a paralytic lying on a bed to Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the sick man before healing his body, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2).*

Because the scribes thought that God alone could remit sins, they judged that Jesus was blaspheming. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, commanded the paralytic to arise, take up his bed, and go to his house. That the sick man actually arose was a visible proof of the fact that Jesus had the authority to remit sins.

The heart of this event is the remission of sins rather than the healing of the body. Jesus is not merely a man of power who heals diseases; He is the Savior who solves sin, the most fundamental problem of man.

2. Calling Matthew the tax collector and being with sinners (verses 9–13)

Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the tax office and called him, saying, *"Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9).* Matthew did not first clean up his past or prove that he was qualified to become a disciple. The call of Jesus came first, and Matthew answered that call by arising and following Him.

When Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners in Matthew's house, the Pharisees criticized Him. Jesus said that it is the sick rather than the healthy who need a physician, and He made it clear that He had come to call not the righteous but sinners.

Jesus was with sinners not because He approved of their sin as right. He drew near to them to have compassion on them, to save them from sin, and to give them a new life. Matthew's

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obedience was not a condition for obtaining salvation but the response of faith that appeared after he received the gracious call.

3. Fasting and the parables of the new cloth and the new wine (verses 14–17)

The disciples of John asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast while they themselves and the Pharisees fasted. Jesus likened Himself to a bridegroom and said that as long as the bridegroom is with them, it is a time not to mourn but to rejoice. But He said that when the day comes for the bridegroom to be taken away, then they will fast.

These words did not deny fasting itself. They mean that fasting has its proper time and purpose, and that it must not be made a means of obtaining the remission of sins or of proving one's own righteousness.

The parables of the unshrunk cloth and the old garment, and of the new wine and the old wineskins, show that the salvation Jesus brought cannot be received by adding a little of it onto one's existing works-centered religious life. The gospel of Jesus is not a teaching that supplements human righteousness but the word of salvation that gives sinners new life and righteousness.

4. Healing the woman with the flow of blood and raising the dead girl (verses 18–26)

A ruler came to Jesus and pleaded with Him to come and lay His hand on his daughter who had just died, so that she would live. Jesus followed him. On the way, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years touched the hem of His garment. The woman believed that Jesus had the power to save her, and Jesus said, "*Be of good cheer, daughter; your*

faith has made you well" (Matthew 9:22).

After this, Jesus entered the ruler's house, took the dead girl by the hand, and raised her up. People saw only the fact that the girl had actually died and ridiculed Jesus' words, but Jesus had the authority to overcome death and give life.

These two events clearly testify that Jesus rules even over long illness and death, which no human method can solve. It was not faith itself that produced the power; the power of salvation was in Jesus, the object of that faith.

5. Opening the eyes of the two blind men (verses 27–31)

The two blind men followed Jesus, crying out, *"Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matthew 9:27). "Son of David"* is a title that refers to the Messiah whom God had promised to send. Although these men could not see Jesus with their physical eyes, by faith they recognized who Jesus was.

Jesus asked them whether they believed that He was able to open their eyes. When the two men answered that they believed, Jesus touched their eyes and opened them.

Jesus commanded them not to make this known, but they spread the news about Him far and wide. Seeing that we must obey the word of Jesus however great the grace we have received may be, their behavior cannot unconditionally be regarded as a model of faith.

6. Healing the demon-possessed man who could not speak (verses 32–34)

People brought to Jesus a man who had become unable to speak because he was demon-possessed. When Jesus cast out the demon, the man spoke. This event clearly reveals that Jesus is the One who rules even over the power of evil spirits and sets people free from their oppression.

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However, we must not generalize from this case that every speech impediment or disease is caused by demons. Only in this man's case does the passage state that the cause was the work of a demon.

Seeing the same event, the multitudes marveled, but the Pharisees slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. Faith does not arise merely from having seen a miracle. A stubborn heart can distort even the clear work of God.

7. Having compassion on the multitudes without a shepherd and making His disciples ask for workers (verses 35–38)

Jesus went about all the cities and villages doing three things.

He taught the word in the synagogues, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and healed every disease and every infirmity.

Jesus saw the multitudes struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd, and He had compassion on them. And He told His disciples that since the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, they should pray to God, the Lord of the harvest, to send out workers.

These words connect directly with Matthew chapter 10, which follows. The disciples who prayed for workers to be sent out soon received Jesus' call and were sent out to preach the gospel. This prayer therefore includes the meaning that they themselves would prepare and obey as workers whom God could send.

The core meaning of Matthew chapter 9

Matthew chapter 9 presents Jesus not as a mere miracle worker but as the Savior of authority and mercy, who remits sins, calls sinners, rules over disease, death, and evil spirits,

and preaches the gospel of the kingdom to wandering people.

The ground on which Jesus remits sins lies in this: He received the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore that sin and received all the judgment on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising again from the dead. Man does not obtain the remission of sins by religious acts such as fasting or good deeds; he receives by faith the salvation Jesus has accomplished. Obedience and preaching the gospel are not conditions of salvation but the fruits of faith that appear after one is saved.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 9 clearly testifies that Jesus is the Savior who overcomes the power of sin, disease, death, and evil spirits, and that He is the One who has compassion on sinners and wandering multitudes, saves them, and calls them to be workers of the gospel.

2) Matthew chapter 9 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapter 9 shows how Jesus rules over sin, disease, death, and spiritual oppression, which man cannot solve by his own strength. There is no need to force each event into being a direct symbol of Jesus' baptism or of the Cross. We must first examine the meaning of the actual event, and then connect the principle of salvation revealed in that event with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel that Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received all the judgment by carrying those sins and dying on

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the Cross shedding His blood, and completed salvation by rising again from the dead. A sinner receives the remission of sins by believing not in his own works but in the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

1. Jesus, who first remitted the sins of the paralytic (verses 1–8)

The paralytic could not come to Jesus by his own strength. People brought him to Jesus lying on a bed. Before healing the sick man's body, Jesus first declared, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2).*

These words clearly testify that the remission of sins is the grace of God given before any human effort. The paralytic did not do good works or remember and confess all his sins in order to receive the remission of sins. Jesus, who has the authority to remit sins, declared it first.

That Jesus actually raised up the paralytic was His proof, through a visible miracle, of His invisible authority to remit sins. Healing the disease was not what washed away the sin. By healing the sickness, Jesus revealed the fact that He had the authority actually to remit sins.

This remission of sins was not a comfort without any ground. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist beforehand, He received the sins of mankind passed on to Him and fulfilled the righteousness of God. Afterward He bore those sins, was judged on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, accomplishing the perfect remission of sins. Therefore the words *"your sins are forgiven you"* are an authoritative declaration grounded on the salvation that Jesus Himself would complete.

Just as the paralytic arose and returned home carrying his bed after receiving the remission of sins and healing, obedience

is not a condition of salvation but the fruit of faith that appears after receiving grace.

2. Coming to the sinner's place and calling Matthew (verses 9–13)

Matthew was sitting at the tax office. It was not that he first put his life as a tax collector in order, became a righteous man, and then went to find Jesus. Jesus first saw Matthew, who was despised as a sinner, and called him, saying, *"Follow Me" (Matthew 9:9)*.

That Matthew arose and followed Jesus was not a merit for obtaining the call. It was the response of faith to Jesus' gracious call. Salvation is not a matter of man making himself clean and ascending to God; it is Jesus coming to sinners and calling them out of the place of sin.

When Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, the Pharisees criticized Him. But Jesus revealed Himself as the physician whom the sick need and said that He had come to call sinners.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is needed by those who acknowledge their sin and helplessness rather than by those who consider themselves righteous. A person who thinks he is healthy does not look for a physician. In the same way, a person who believes in his own works and religious merits finds it hard to accept the remission of sins that Jesus has completed.

Jesus was with sinners not because He approved of their sin as right. He drew near to them to take their sins upon Himself, to save them, and to give them a new life.

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3. The new gospel shown by fasting and the parable of the new wine (verses 14–17)

The disciples of John asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast while they themselves and the Pharisees fasted. They judged faith by the standard of outward religious acts.

Jesus likened Himself to a bridegroom. What befits the wedding guests who are with the bridegroom is not sorrow but joy. Because Jesus, who saves sinners, had come, His disciples had the joy of salvation.

Jesus did not abolish fasting itself. He said that when the day comes for the bridegroom to be taken away, they will fast. The problem lies in making fasting a means of washing away sin or an act that proves one's own righteousness. A person who has received the remission of sins may practice self-restraint for prayer and for the ministry of the gospel, but such acts must never become a condition of the remission of sins.

The parables of the unshrunk cloth and the old garment, and of the new wine and the old wineskins, show the same flow. The gospel of the water and the Spirit must not be merely added a little onto one's existing works-centered religious life.

If on the one hand a person believes that Jesus has removed all sins, while on the other hand he thinks that every time he sins he must wash his sins again with his own prayers of repentance, these two beliefs collide with each other. The righteousness of God that Jesus has completed cannot be mixed with human merits.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a teaching that slightly improves one's old religious life; it is the word of salvation that makes sinners completely new and turns them into God's children.

4. The power of salvation revealed to the woman with the flow of blood and the dead girl (verses 18–26)

The woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years could not solve her disease by her own strength. But she believed that Jesus had the power to save her, and she touched the hem of His garment. The power that healed the woman was not in the garment or in her hand but in Jesus. Her faith was not a merit that produced the power; it was the channel through which she came to Jesus, the Owner of the power.

The woman did not first make herself clean and then come to Jesus. She came just as she was, in the state regarded as unclean, and Jesus received her, calling her *"daughter."* Sinners likewise do not come to Jesus after making their hearts clean by their own works. They receive the remission of sins by believing the salvation Jesus has accomplished.

The ruler's daughter was already dead. A dead person can neither express faith nor rise by himself. When Jesus came to the girl and took her by the hand, she arose. The power of life belonged entirely to Jesus.

This event clearly testifies that Jesus is the Lord of life who rules even over death. Jesus is not merely One who restores a dead person to life for a while; He is the Savior who also solves sin, the root cause of death. For Jesus received sin passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the wages of sin on the Cross, and overcame sin and death by rising again from the dead.

5. Jesus, who opened the eyes of the two blind men (verses 27–31)

The two blind men could not see Jesus with their physical eyes, but they called Him the *"Son of David" (Matthew 9:27).*

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This title was a confession of faith acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah whom God had promised.

They did not claim any merit of their own but pleaded, *"Have mercy on us!" (Matthew 9:27).* Jesus asked them whether they believed that He was able to open their eyes, and when they confessed that they believed, He touched their eyes and opened them.

Applied to the gospel, man cannot see how his sins have been removed with his own wisdom or religious experiences alone. He must realize through the word why Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and why He died on the Cross.

When we know the fact that Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, it also becomes clear that the Cross was where He received the judgment of that sin. When we believe this, we escape from the spiritual darkness of trying to wash away sin with our own works and come to see the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

6. Setting free the demon-possessed man who could not speak (verses 32–34)

This man could not speak because of the oppression of a demon, but when Jesus cast out the demon, he spoke. The heart of this event is not any ability of the man who could not speak but the authority of Jesus, who ruled over the evil spirit and set the man free.

However, we must not generalize from this event that every speech impediment or disease is caused by demons. The passage reveals that the cause was the work of a demon only in this man's case.

When sinners believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they are saved from sin and condemnation. Because

Jesus took on all sins and received the judgment, Satan cannot condemn believers on the ground of their sins.

A person who has received the remission of sins becomes able to testify of the salvation Jesus accomplished instead of speaking of his own works and merits. Yet no one is saved because he speaks the gospel. One first receives the remission of sins, and then testifies of the gospel as the fruit of that grace.

Though they saw the same miracle, the multitudes marveled, but the Pharisees slandered the power of Jesus as coming from the ruler of the demons. This shows that when a person's heart is stubborn, he can hear the clear word of salvation and still reject it.

7. Sheep without a shepherd and workers for the harvest (verses 35–38)

Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching the word, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing the sick. And when He saw the multitudes struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd, He had compassion on them.

It was not that the people had no religious leaders. But many leaders, while teaching the Law and religious works, could not tell sinners how to receive the perfect remission of sins. So the people wandered in sin and condemnation even while leading religious lives.

A true worker of the gospel is not someone who makes people belong to himself. He is someone who clearly teaches how Jesus saved sinners through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and His rising again from the dead.

Jesus said that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, and He had His disciples pray to God to send out workers. In Matthew chapter 10, which follows, those very disciples are

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sent out. This prayer, therefore, is not a prayer asking God to send only others, but a prayer of obedience in which one offers himself as a person God can send.

A life of serving the gospel is not a condition for obtaining the remission of sins. It is the fruit that comes after salvation, in which a person who has already received the remission of sins carries the mercy of Jesus in his heart and preaches the word of life to other souls.

The core of the gospel revealed in Matthew chapter 9

Matthew chapter 9 shows the state of man in several figures. Like the paralytic, man cannot rise from sin by himself; like the woman with the flow of blood, he cannot end his uncleanness by his own methods; and like the dead girl, he cannot create life by himself. Moreover, like the two blind men, he cannot see the truth of salvation; like the man who could not speak, he cannot testify of the righteousness of Jesus; and like sheep without a shepherd, he wanders.

But Jesus is the Savior who remits sins, calls sinners, heals the sick, raises the dead, makes the blind see, and sets the oppressed free.

The ground of all this salvation is not human prayers, fasting, or good deeds, but the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed everlasting salvation by rising again from the dead. Whoever believes this fact receives the remission of all sins and obtains new life.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 9 clearly testifies to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus comes to people who cannot escape from sin and death

by their own strength, makes them believe the salvation He completed through His baptism, the Cross, and His rising again from the dead, and gives them the remission of sins, life, and a new way of living. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 9

Jesus has compassion on sinners and gives them the remission of sins and new life

Introduction

Matthew chapter 9 is the word in which Jesus comes to people who cannot escape by themselves from under sin, disease, and death, and bestows salvation on them. One after another there appear the paralytic lying on a bed and Matthew sitting at the tax office, the woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years and the dead girl, the two men who could not see and the demon-possessed man who could not speak. Their circumstances differed from one another, but they were the same in that they could not solve their problems by their own strength. Jesus did not turn away from such people; by remitting sins, healing the sick, and raising the dead, He clearly revealed that He is the true Savior who rules over the power of sin and death.

To the paralytic Jesus first said, *"Your sins are forgiven you."* In people's eyes the body that could not walk was the greatest problem, but Jesus showed that sin before God is man's most fundamental problem. He then called Matthew, the tax collector despised by people as a sinner, and ate with tax collectors and sinners in his house. The Pharisees, who considered themselves righteous, could not understand this, but Jesus said that just as it is not the healthy but the sick who need

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a physician, He had come to call sinners. Salvation is not a matter of man first making himself clean and then coming to God; it is the grace by which Jesus comes to sinners, calls them in His mercy, and saves them from sin.

When the disciples of John asked about fasting, Jesus spoke the parables of the unshrunk cloth and the old garment, and of the new wine and the old wineskins. The salvation Jesus accomplishes is not a doctrine added in part onto the old faith that tries to become righteous by human merits and religious works. It is the gospel of the new covenant that makes us lay down our own righteousness and fully receive the righteousness God has accomplished. Prayer, fasting, and devotion must not be conditions for obtaining the remission of sins but the fruits of faith offered in gratitude for God's grace by those already saved.

The miracles that follow show that Jesus is the One who solves even the problems of sin and death, which man cannot solve. The woman with the flow of blood was saved by believing in Jesus, and the dead girl arose when Jesus took her by the hand. The two blind men called Jesus the Son of David and asked for His mercy, and Jesus opened their eyes. The demon-possessed man who could not speak also came to speak when Jesus cast out the demon. The multitudes who saw all these things marveled, but the Pharisees saw the same works and slandered Jesus. Even when one sees the work of God before his very eyes, if he does not abandon his own righteousness and his fixed thoughts, he may fail to receive Jesus as the Savior.

At the end of Matthew chapter 9, Jesus goes about all the cities and villages, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing the sick and the weak. And seeing the multitudes struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd, He

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has compassion on them. The compassion of Jesus did not end with looking sorrowfully at people's circumstances. To save them from sin He preached the gospel, and He had His disciples pray for workers to be sent out for the harvest. God raises up those who have been saved first as workers of the gospel and sends them to souls that do not yet know the way of life.

This salvation was accomplished within the righteousness of God that Jesus completed through the water and the Spirit. When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He took on all the sins of the world; He bore those sins and received all the judgment by dying on the Cross shedding His blood; and He overcame the power of sin and death by rising again from the dead. Man does not wash away his sins with his own religious works or merits; by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, he receives the remission of all sins and obtains new life.

Matthew chapter 9 shows that Jesus is the true Savior who seeks and calls sinners, raises up those who cannot rise by themselves, and opens their spiritual eyes and mouths so that they see and proclaim God's salvation. Now, as we examine the words of the passage in order, let us look into the grace of Jesus, who has compassion on sinners, gives them the remission of sins and eternal life, and raises up the saved as workers of the gospel.

Jesus gave the paralytic true salvation with His authority to remit sins

"So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own

city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, 'This Man blasphemes!' But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men" (Matthew 9:1–8).

The paralytic lying on a bed could not rise and come to Jesus by his own strength. People had to bring him to Jesus as he lay on his bed. This figure shows the spiritual state of man bound by sin. Man cannot remove the sin of his heart with his own resolutions and good deeds, nor can he escape by himself from God's judgment on sin. Just as the paralytic needed Jesus, every sinner needs the Savior who remits his sins.

Jesus did not heal the paralytic's body first, but said, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."* In people's eyes the disease of the body was the greatest problem, but in Jesus' eyes the sin that stood before God was the more fundamental problem. For even if the disease of the body is healed, if sin remains as it is, the judgment of sin cannot in the end be avoided. Jesus did not demand that the paralytic do anything; He gave him the remission of sins as a gift.

Because the scribes thought that God alone could remit man's sins, they judged Jesus' words to be blasphemy. It is true that only God can remit sins, but they did not know that Jesus, who stood before them, was God come in the flesh of man.

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Jesus knew the thoughts in their hearts, and by raising up the paralytic He revealed that He was the Savior with the authority to remit sins. Through the visible healing of the body He proved His invisible authority to remit sins.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the words *"your sins are forgiven you"* are no groundless declaration. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of all mankind upon His own body. Just as the high priest in the Old Testament era laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed the people's sins onto it, Jesus took over the sin of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. And He bore that sin, was judged on the Cross shedding His blood, and completed salvation from sin and death by rising again from the dead. Therefore whoever believes in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus is washed of all sins and becomes righteous before God.

The paralytic did not receive the remission of sins after first proving his qualification by rising and walking. After receiving the remission of sins from Jesus, he arose, took up his bed, and returned home. In the same way, man does not receive the remission of sins by living a good life; he receives the remission of sins by believing in the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished through the water and the Spirit, and then lives a new life. Jesus is the true Savior who says *"be of good cheer"* to those who cannot rise by themselves because of sin, and gives them the perfect remission of sins and new life.

Jesus came to call not those who consider themselves righteous but sinners who need His mercy

"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance'" (Matthew 9:9–13).

Matthew was a tax collector who sat at the tax office collecting taxes. Because the tax collectors of that day collected taxes from their own people for Rome, people treated them as traitors and sinners. But Jesus did not wait until Matthew first made his life clean and became a righteous man. He came first to Matthew, who was sitting in the seat of a sinner, and called him, saying, *"Follow Me."* Salvation is not a matter of a sinner attaining his own qualification and coming to God; it is Jesus coming to the sinner and calling him by grace.

Hearing Jesus' words, Matthew arose and followed Him. This does not simply mean that he left the place called the tax office; it means that he entrusted his life to Jesus and began to follow Him as his Savior and Master. Many tax collectors and sinners gathered in Matthew's house, and Jesus ate with them. That Jesus was with sinners does not mean that He approved their sins or allowed them to keep living in sin. Just as a

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physician draws near to treat the sick, Jesus drew near to sinners to save them from sin.

The Pharisees despised the tax collectors and sinners while thinking that they themselves were righteous. But before God the Pharisees were also sinners. The difference lay not in whether they had sin or not, but in whether they realized that they were sinners and acknowledged that they needed the salvation of Jesus. A person who thinks he is healthy does not look for a physician, but a person who knows he is sick seeks treatment. In the same way, it is the person who acknowledges his sin and helplessness that comes to seek the mercy of Jesus.

When Jesus said, *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice,"* He did not mean that He was abolishing all worship and service offered to God. He meant that He does not want the kind of faith that tries to make itself righteous with religious ceremonies and good deeds while leaving sin in the heart as it is. God is not One who receives human merits and gives salvation in return; He is the One who has compassion on sinners without any merit and bestows salvation on them first. A sinner, therefore, rather than putting forward his own sacrifices and works, must acknowledge that he is a person who absolutely needs God's help and ask for His mercy.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the mercy of Jesus did not end as a feeling that merely looked at sinners with pity. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of all mankind, including Matthew's, passed on to His own body. And He bore those sins, was judged on the Cross shedding His blood, and completed the work of saving sinners by rising again from the dead. Jesus did not demand sacrifices and merits from sinners; He had them receive the remission of sins by believing in the righteousness of God that He accomplished with His baptism

and the Cross.

The words that Jesus came to call sinners do not mean that He leaves people to keep living as sinners. Jesus calls sinners to believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, washes them of all sins and makes them righteous, and has them live as God's children and workers. Just as Matthew received Jesus' call, arose, and followed Him, the person who has received the remission of sins comes to live a life of preaching this gospel to other sinners, thankful for the mercy of the Lord who saved him.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a doctrine added to one's old religious life but the perfect gospel that makes faith and life new

"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'" (Matthew 9:14–17).

The disciples of John asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast when they themselves and the Pharisees fasted. They were making the religious act of fasting an important standard of faith. Fasting itself is not wrong, but if a person thinks himself more pious and righteous through such acts as fasting, that

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becomes a works-centered religious life. Man can neither wash away his sins with fasting or asceticism nor become a righteous person before God by them.

Jesus spoke of Himself as the bridegroom of the wedding. A wedding at which the bridegroom is present is a place not for mourning but for rejoicing. Jesus came not to shut sinners up in condemnation and sorrow but to save them from sin and give them the joy of the kingdom of God. The words *"the bridegroom will be taken away"* refer to the time when Jesus would die hanging on the Cross. At that time His disciples would mourn and fast, but Jesus was not saying that fasting is a way of washing away sin. The fasting of a saved person is for seeking God's help and serving the work of the gospel, not for paying the wages of his sin with his own asceticism.

Jesus said that if a piece of unshrunk cloth is put on an old garment, the garment is torn all the more. The old garment represents the framework of the old faith that tries to become righteous by human works and the keeping of the Law. The piece of unshrunk cloth represents the gospel of the new covenant that Jesus accomplishes. If a person leaves his existing works-centered faith as it is and adds on only a part of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, a contradiction arises in his faith. If he says that Jesus took on all sins and yet believes that he must wash his sins again every day with his own prayers of repentance and good deeds, he does not fully believe the salvation Jesus has completed.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the new wine is the gospel of salvation that Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of all mankind upon His own body; He bore those sins and was judged on the Cross shedding His blood; and He completed

salvation by rising again from the dead. The new wineskin is the new heart and faith that abandons one's own works and merits and receives the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished just as it is. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a religious tool that man uses to supplement his insufficient righteousness; it is the gospel that makes him lay down all human righteousness and believe only in the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

The words about putting new wine into new wineskins also apply to life after receiving the remission of sins. If before being saved a person lived for his own success and desires, after being born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit he must make the will of God who saved him the purpose of his life. Just as Jesus gave Himself up to save us, the person who has received the remission of sins must live serving the souls that do not yet know the gospel and seeking the benefit of others. This is not a deed done to pay back the price of salvation but the new life that flows out of the grace received freely.

These words, therefore, are not a teaching that forbids fasting; they are words that set right the relation between religious acts and salvation. Fasting, prayer, and devotion are not conditions for obtaining the remission of sins but the fruits of faith by which those who have already received the remission of sins serve God with gratitude. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must abandon the framework of the old religion, fully believe the salvation Jesus has completed, and make the kingdom of God and the preaching of the gospel the purpose of his new life.

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Jesus is the Savior who gives the remission of sins and eternal life to those who believe

"While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land" (Matthew 9:18–26).

A ruler believed that although his daughter had died, she would live again if Jesus laid His hand on her. He did not deny the reality of death, but he believed that Jesus had the authority of life that could raise even the dead. Death cannot be solved by man's position or ability, but Jesus is God, who creates life and raises the dead. Man, who is spiritually dead because of sin, likewise cannot come to life by his own works; he must receive the new life that only Jesus gives.

While Jesus was on His way to the ruler's house, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years touched the hem of His garment. This woman had long been losing her life as the blood kept flowing, and she could not solve her disease with her own strength and methods. This

shows the figure of man, who keeps sinning without ceasing and in the end heads toward death. Man cannot solve the root of sin with his own resolutions and religious acts; he must meet Jesus, who saves him from sin and death.

The woman did not believe that some magical power was in Jesus' garment; she believed that Jesus was the One who could save her. So Jesus did not say, "You have been saved because you touched My garment"; He said, *"Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well."* Salvation is not obtained by man's efforts or merits; it is received by believing with the heart the salvation Jesus has accomplished. That Jesus called the woman *"daughter"* shows that He did not merely heal the disease of her body, but brought her out of fear and alienation to enjoy peace in the love of God.

Because the people gathered at the ruler's house knew that the girl had died, they ridiculed Jesus when He said, *"The girl is not dead, but sleeping."* But even death, which man cannot reverse, is to Jesus like waking someone who sleeps. When Jesus took the girl by the hand, she arose. This event reveals that Jesus is the One who overcomes death, the wages of sin, and gives eternal life and resurrection to those who believe.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the healing of the woman with the flow of blood and the raising of the dead girl are signs showing that Jesus has solved our problem of sin and death. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body. And He bore those sins, was judged on the Cross shedding His blood, and overcame the power of sin and death by rising again from the dead. Whoever believes in this salvation, which Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, is washed of all sins and obtains eternal life.

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Neither the woman with the flow of blood nor the dead girl could solve her problem with her own ability, but both were saved by the power of Jesus. Rather than being a promise that every believer's physical disease will be healed at once, this miracle shows the fact that Jesus is the true Savior who has overcome sin and death. Even though the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may pass through physical disease and death in this world, he receives the remission of sins and eternal life, and on the last day he will rise again and live with Jesus forever.

The faith that believes in Jesus as the Savior opens our spiritual eyes

"When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.' But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country" (Matthew 9:27–31).

The two blind men could not see Jesus with their physical eyes, but they heard the news about Him and followed Him. They cried out toward Jesus, *"Son of David, have mercy on us!" "Son of David"* is a term that refers to the Messiah whom God had promised to send through the lineage of David. Though the eyes of their flesh could not see, these men had hearts that believed that Jesus was the promised Savior.

The two blind men did not put forward their own merits or good deeds. Knowing that they could not open their eyes by their own strength, they asked only for the mercy of Jesus. This shows the right attitude in which a sinner comes before God. A sinner cannot wash away his sins with his own efforts or prayers of repentance; he must rely only on the grace of Jesus, who has compassion on sinners and saves them.

Jesus asked them, *"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"* What matters here is not the size of faith or the strength of human will but the object of faith. The two blind men did not think that there was power in their own faith; they believed that Jesus had the power to open their eyes. The words *"According to your faith let it be to you,"* therefore, do not mean that anything will come true if only a person desires it earnestly. They mean that the person who believes who Jesus is and that He is able to save receives that grace.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the event in which the eyes of the two blind men were opened shows a person whose spiritual eyes were darkened by sin coming to open his spiritual eyes by believing in the salvation of Jesus Christ. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body; He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross; and He completed salvation by rising again from the dead. The Holy Spirit testifies that this gospel of the water and the blood is the righteousness of God and the truth that saves sinners.

A person whose spiritual eyes are dark, even though he knows the fact that Jesus died on the Cross, does not know when and how Jesus took over his sins. But when he believes in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, connecting them as one, he comes to see that he has had all his sins transferred on to Jesus and that the judgment of those sins

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is already finished. This is how one's spiritual eyes are opened through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The miracle of opening the eyes of the two blind men is a sign revealing that Jesus is the promised Messiah and the true Savior. This word is not a promise that every physical disease of believers will surely be healed at once. The more fundamental grace is that sinners believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sins, and come to see the kingdom of God. True faith is not looking at the strength of one's own faith but looking at Jesus Christ, who took on all our sins and was judged for them.

Jesus is the Savior who delivers souls from the power of sin and Satan and makes them speak the gospel

"As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.'" (Matthew 9:32–34).

The man who had become mute because he was demon-possessed could neither speak of his own condition nor ask Jesus for help by himself. So people brought him to Jesus. This shows how important it is to preach the gospel to those spiritually caught in the deception of Satan and lead them before Jesus. A sinner cannot escape from the power of sin and Satan with his own wisdom and ability; he must meet Jesus, the true Savior.

When Jesus cast out the demon, the man who could not speak spoke at once. This is a sign revealing that Jesus is

stronger than demons and that He is God, who rules over the power of sin and Satan. However, this event must not be interpreted to mean that every speech impediment or disease is caused by demons. Through this man's particular case, the passage shows that Jesus is the true Savior who overcomes the power of Satan.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the way for a person to escape completely from the deception of Satan is to be washed of the sins of his heart. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body; He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross; and He saved us from sin and death by rising again from the dead. When a person believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit, he receives the remission of all the sins of his heart, becomes a child of God, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in his heart.

The spiritually mute does not mean only a person who cannot say anything with his mouth. If a person professes to believe in Jesus and yet does not know how Jesus took on our sins through His baptism and how He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, he cannot testify of the whole gospel that saves sinners. But the person who has heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins can testify clearly, "Jesus has removed all my sins with His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection." This is the grace by which the spiritually closed mouth is opened.

Seeing this, the multitudes marveled, saying, *"It was never seen like this in Israel!"* But the Pharisees saw the very same sign and slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by relying on the ruler of the demons. They could not deny the power of Jesus, but because they would not abandon their religious authority and their fixed thoughts, they distorted the

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work of God into the work of Satan. Without faith willing to receive the truth into the heart, a person can stand before the clear work of God and yet oppose Jesus.

These words teach that true salvation does not lie merely in experiencing amazing miracles. The greatest miracle is that a sinner believes in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, is saved from all sins, and comes to testify with his mouth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which he could not speak of before. Jesus is the true Savior who sets free those caught by sin and Satan and changes them into people who believe in and preach the righteousness of God.

Jesus has compassion on souls without a shepherd and seeks workers of the gospel

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:35–38).

Jesus did not visit only the great cities; He went about all the cities and villages. He taught the word of God in the synagogues, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and healed the sick and the weak. The work Jesus did was teaching, preaching the gospel, and healing the sick. At the center of all this ministry was the love of God, who wanted to save souls in sin and suffering.

The purpose for which Jesus healed the sick was not merely to make their bodies healthy. These signs revealed the fact that Jesus is God and the Messiah who came to save sinners. Even when the disease of the body is healed, man in the end grows old and dies again, but the person who has received the remission of sins obtains eternal life and enters the kingdom of God. Therefore the ultimate purpose of the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached was to save people from sin.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the gospel of the kingdom is the news of the salvation Jesus accomplished to bring sinners into the kingdom of God. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body; He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross; and He completed salvation by rising again from the dead. Whoever believes in this baptism, Cross, and resurrection of Jesus receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them. The people of that day had religious leaders such as the scribes and the Pharisees, but those leaders could not guide the people to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. They only taught the people the Law and religious works, and could not tell them how to be washed of their sins and enter the kingdom of God. As a result, the people were struggling and wandering in sin and fear like sheep without a shepherd.

A true shepherd is not a person who teaches people his own wisdom or religious traditions, but a person who accurately preaches the gospel of the remission of sins that Jesus completed through the water and the Spirit. However much Bible knowledge and religious zeal a person may have, if his

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own problem of sin has not been solved, he cannot lead others to the way of life. It is the person who first believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receives the remission of sins, and has the Holy Spirit dwelling in his heart who can testify of the salvation he has received to other souls.

When Jesus said, *"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few,"* He meant that there are many souls who must be saved, but few people to preach the true gospel to them. The Lord of the harvest is God, and it is also God who saves souls. A worker of the gospel is not a person who saves souls with his own ability, but a person who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has completed, just as the word says, and helps people believe it.

Jesus told His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers. In Matthew chapter 10, which follows, Jesus sends those very disciples out into the world. The prayer for workers, therefore, must not stop at a prayer hoping that someone else will go. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must carry in his heart compassion for souls and prepare to preach the gospel wherever God sends him. Through believers who have received the remission of sins, God leads the souls without a shepherd to the way of life. ✉

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 9

[Question] 1. Summarize the main content and teachings recorded in Matthew chapter 9.

Matthew chapter 9 clearly testifies that Jesus Christ is God, who has the authority to remit sins, the Savior who has compassion on sinners, and the Lord of life who rules even disease, demons, and death. It also teaches what kind of people Jesus saves and what the saved must live for.

First, people brought a paralytic lying on a bed to Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."* Before healing his physical disease, Jesus proclaimed the remission of sins. This shows that man's most fundamental problem is not the disease of the body but sin before God, and that the most important purpose for which Jesus came to this world is to save sinners from sin.

Hearing Jesus' words, the scribes thought within themselves that He was blaspheming. But Jesus knew even their thoughts, and after saying, *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins,"* He raised up the paralytic and sent him home. The event of the paralytic rising at once testifies that Jesus is not merely a prophet who heals diseases but God, who has the authority to remit sins.

The authority of Jesus to remit sins was not proclaimed in words only. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body; He bore those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood;

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and He overcame the power of sin and death by rising again from the dead. Therefore the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the perfect remission of sins, not through his own works or merits, but by believing in the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished.

Next, Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the tax office and called him, saying, *"Follow Me."* The tax collectors of that day, who collected taxes from their own people and paid them to Rome, were despised by the Jews as sinners and traitors. But Matthew, receiving Jesus' call, arose at once and followed Him. Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, and to the Pharisees who criticized this He said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."*

When Jesus said, *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners,"* He did not mean that those who consider themselves righteous need no salvation. He meant that although all people are sinners, only the person who acknowledges his sin and weakness and seeks God's mercy and salvation receives Jesus as his Savior and obtains salvation in Him. The Pharisees boasted of their religious works and sacrifices, but Jesus told them to learn the mercy of God, who pities and saves sinners, rather than formal sacrifice.

When the disciples of John the Baptist asked about the matter of fasting, Jesus likened Himself to a bridegroom. He said that the wedding guests cannot mourn while the bridegroom is with them, but that in the days when the bridegroom is taken away from them, they will fast. He also said that no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, and that new wine cannot be put into old wineskins. This means that the new life and the faith of the gospel that Jesus Christ gives cannot be forcibly mixed with human merits or formal religious life.

The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must leave his old religious life of the past and live by a new faith. The saved righteous must not live to build up their own righteousness or to look godly before people; they must make it the purpose of their lives to boast of the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished and to preach the gospel to the souls still in sin.

After this a ruler came to Jesus and pleaded with Him to come and lay His hand on his daughter who had just died, so that she would live. While Jesus was on His way to his house, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years touched His garment. That woman believed that she would be saved if she only laid her hand on His garment. Seeing that faith, Jesus said, *"Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well,"* and the woman was healed at once.

Jesus arrived at the ruler's house and took the dead girl by the hand and raised her up. The events of healing the woman with the flow of blood and raising the dead girl reveal that Jesus is the Lord of life who rules not only long-standing disease but even death. They also show the fact that salvation is received not by human ability or merit but by the faith that believes the word and the power of Jesus.

The two blind men followed Jesus, crying out, *"Son of David, have mercy on us!"* That they called Jesus the Son of David means that they believed Him to be the Christ and the King promised by God. When Jesus asked whether they believed that He was able to do this, they answered yes. Jesus said, *"According to your faith let it be to you,"* and opened their eyes. This teaches that the person who admits that his spiritual eyes are blind and asks for the Lord's mercy comes to see the light of salvation by faith.

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People also brought to Jesus a man who was demon-possessed and could not speak. When Jesus cast out the demon, the man came to speak. But the Pharisees, even though they saw this evident work of God, slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by relying on the ruler of the demons. This shows that when a person is caught in religious prejudice and self-righteousness, he can see God's saving work and yet not believe it, and can even oppose it.

Just as the man who was seized by a demon and could not speak came to speak after meeting Jesus, so also the person who could not testify of salvation because he did not know the true gospel, when he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of sins and becomes a person who testifies of Jesus Christ. The saved must clearly tell other souls how they received the remission of sins.

Finally, Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. Seeing the multitudes, Jesus had compassion on them, for they were struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd. And He said, "*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few,*" and told His disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.

The central teaching of Matthew chapter 9, therefore, is the fact that Jesus is the true God and Savior, who calls sinners and remits their sins, heals the sick, casts out demons, and even raises the dead. The person who acknowledges his sin and his spiritual disease and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished receives the remission of sins and new life. And the saved must live as workers of the

harvest who have compassion on the souls wandering without a shepherd and preach to them the true gospel of the remission of sins.

[Question] 2. Which town does *"His own city"* in Matthew 9:1 refer to?

"His own city" in Matthew 9:1 refers to Capernaum.

"So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city" (Matthew 9:1).

Capernaum was the place Jesus made the center of His Galilean ministry. Matthew 4:13 records as follows.

"And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali,"

The Gospel of Mark, which records the same event of healing the paralytic, also states the place clearly.

"And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house" (Mark 2:1).

"His own city," therefore, does not mean Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, or Nazareth, where He grew up; it means Capernaum, where Jesus stayed and which He made the base of His gospel ministry in Galilee. Here Jesus taught the word and healed many sick people, and in Matthew chapter 9 He remitted the sins of the paralytic and healed his disease as well.

[Question] 3. Explain the faith of the people who brought the paralytic and the words of Jesus recorded in Matthew 9:2.

When the people brought the paralytic to Him, Jesus saw

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their faith and first remitted the paralytic's sins. Their faith appeared in their action of believing that Jesus could heal the paralytic and bringing him before the Lord.

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you'" (Matthew 9:2).

After this, to reveal that He had the authority to remit sins, Jesus raised him up with His word.

"'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he arose and departed to his house" (Matthew 9:6–7).

Jesus, therefore, did not merely heal the paralytic's body; He first remitted his sins, and then raised up his body with His authoritative word and restored him completely. That the paralytic arose was evidence showing the fact that Jesus has the authority to remit sins.

[Question] 4. In Matthew 9:3–4, how did the scribes who heard Jesus proclaim the remission of sins to the paralytic judge Him within themselves?

Jesus said to the paralytic as follows.

"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2).

When the scribes heard these words, they thought that Jesus had recklessly claimed the authority to remit sins, which God alone can exercise.

"And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, 'This Man blasphemes!'" (Matthew 9:3).

Here, the word *"blasphemes"* means that someone insults God or infringes on God's authority. Because the scribes did not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, they judged His word of remitting sins to be blasphemy against God.

But Jesus knew even the thoughts they had not expressed in words.

"But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4).

Jesus pointed out that their judgment was not a simple misunderstanding but *"evil"* thinking. The scribes had knowledge of the Scriptures, but they did not recognize that Jesus, who stood before them, was the Son of God with the authority to remit sins.

The judgment of the scribes, therefore, was that Jesus was speaking blasphemy; but in truth it was a wrong judgment that failed to believe that Jesus is the true God and the Savior with the authority to remit sins.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 9:4–5, what did Jesus mean when He pointed out the evil thoughts in the scribes' hearts and asked which would be easier, to proclaim the remission of sins or to make the man arise and walk?

Knowing that the scribes were judging Him within themselves as blaspheming, Jesus spoke as follows.

"But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4).

"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?" (Matthew 9:5).

Jesus first rebuked the scribes' judgment as "evil thoughts in their hearts". For they did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God with the authority to remit sins.

Jesus then asked which would be easier: to say that "one's sins have been remitted", or to say, "Arise and walk." Whether

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sins have been remitted is hard to confirm at once with human eyes, but anyone can see with his eyes whether the paralytic rises and walks.

By actually making the paralytic rise and walk, Jesus intended to prove clearly that He has not only the power to heal the diseases of the body but also the authority to remit man's sins on earth.

[Question] 6. In Matthew 9:6–7, by what method did Jesus reveal that He has the authority to remit sins?

Jesus proved that He has the authority to remit sins by actually making the paralytic rise and walk.

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.'" (Matthew 9:6).

"And he arose and departed to his house" (Matthew 9:7).

Whether sins have been remitted is hard to confirm directly with human eyes. But the paralytic rising and walking away with his own bed was clear evidence that everyone could see. Through this visible healing, Jesus revealed that the invisible authority to remit sins also belonged to Him.

The paralytic heard Jesus' command and arose at once. This clearly testifies that the word of Jesus is not a mere comfort or declaration but the authoritative word of God, which actually heals disease and remits sin.

Jesus, therefore, by healing the paralytic's body completely and sending him home on his own feet, proved that He is the Savior who fully solves not only man's disease but also the problem of sin.

[Question] 7. What is meant by the statement that Jesus healed the sick during His earthly ministry in order to reveal that He had the power to remit man's sins?

In healing the sick, Jesus also had the purposes of showing His compassionate love and the power of the kingdom of God. But in the event of the paralytic in Matthew chapter 9, the focus is especially on proving the fact that Jesus has the authority to remit sins.

1. The remission of sins cannot be confirmed with the eyes

Jesus first spoke to the paralytic.

"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2).

But the remission of sins is invisible to human eyes. When Jesus made this declaration, the people around could not confirm with their eyes whether the paralytic's sins had really been remitted.

So the scribes thought that Jesus, without actually having the authority to remit sins, was speaking of what God alone can do, and they judged Him to be blaspheming.

2. The healing of the body can be confirmed with the eyes

Jesus asked the scribes.

"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?" (Matthew 9:5).

"Your sins are forgiven you" is a saying whose result is invisible, but *"Arise and walk"* is a saying whose result appears immediately. If the paralytic could not rise, it would be exposed that there was no power in that word.

Jesus proved the invisible authority to remit sins through

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the visible healing of disease.

3. Jesus Himself made clear the purpose of the healing

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6).

The purpose for which Jesus raised up the paralytic was not simply to display His amazing power. It was to make people believe in Him as the Savior who remits sins.

Jesus then continued as follows.

"'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he arose and departed to his house" (Matthew 9:6–7).

As the paralytic actually arose and returned home carrying his bed, it was proved that there is authority in Jesus' word. If the word that healed the disease was fulfilled just as it was spoken, this showed that the words *"your sins are forgiven you"* were also true.

4. The healing of the disease is not what removed the sin

Here a distinction must be made. It is not that the sin disappeared because the paralytic's body was healed. Nor did the healing of the body pay the price of the remission of sins.

The ground of the remission of sins is the salvation Jesus accomplished. By receiving baptism from John, Jesus took on the sin of the world; He received the judgment of that sin on the Cross and then rose again. The healing was a sign revealing that Jesus, who accomplishes this salvation, has the authority to remit sins.

The following distinctions, therefore, can be made.

The ground of the remission of sins: the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus

The declaration of the remission of sins: *"Your sins are forgiven you"*

The evidence showing the authority to remit sins: the paralytic rising and walking

5. The remission of sins is a more fundamental grace than the healing of the body

It is also a great grace for the disease of the body to be healed. But even a person healed of disease grows old and dies someday. The remission of sins, on the other hand, is the grace of salvation that restores one's relationship with God and brings him to eternal life.

Jesus healed the paralytic's temporary need, the disease of his body, but first He solved his eternal problem, sin. Through this He revealed that He is not a mere healer of diseases but the Son of God, who saves sinners.

To sum it up in one sentence, it is as follows.

By raising up the paralytic before their eyes, Jesus proved that He has the authority of the Savior, who actually remits even the invisible sins of man.

[Question] 8. In Matthew 9:8, when the multitudes saw the paralytic rise and go home, how did they respond to God, who had given such authority to men?

The response of the multitudes who saw Jesus heal the paralytic was largely twofold.

"Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men" (Matthew 9:8).

First, they feared. This fear means not so much mere fright as the awe they felt on witnessing the amazing power of God,

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which cannot be seen in man. Seeing the paralytic rise and walk at a single word of Jesus, they felt great shock and amazement.

Second, they glorified God. The multitudes acknowledged that the power of God had been revealed through what Jesus did. For Jesus had not only healed the disease of the body but also revealed the authority to remit sins.

The multitudes, therefore, seeing the amazing power of Jesus, feared before the authority of God and praised and glorified God. However, the passage does not state clearly whether they fully realized that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior. They glorified God first of all because of the amazing power that had appeared before their eyes.

[Question] 9. Who was the tax collector recorded in Matthew 9:9 whom Jesus called as His disciple?

The person chosen as Jesus' disciple at the tax office in the region of Capernaum was Matthew.

"As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him" (Matthew 9:9).

Matthew was working as a tax collector, but when he received Jesus' call, he arose and followed Him.

[Question] 10. In Matthew 9:10–11, with whom did the Pharisees see Jesus eating when they criticized Him?

The Pharisees criticized Jesus when they saw Him eating

with many tax collectors and sinners in Matthew's house.

"Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'" (Matthew 9:10–11).

Because the Pharisees regarded tax collectors and sinners as people to be kept at a distance, they criticized Jesus for eating with them.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 9:12–13, with the words *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick,"* Jesus revealed whom He came to call.

Jesus said that just as the sick need a physician, sinners need the Savior. The sick here refers not simply to those whose bodies are diseased, but to those who acknowledge before the word of God that they are fundamentally bound to sin and are subject to judgment and destruction because of their sins.

On the other hand, the well or the righteous refers not to people who actually have no sin at all, but to those who, like the Pharisees, trust their own religious works and righteousness and consider themselves righteous. The person who thinks he has no sin and can serve God well by himself does not realize his need of the Savior. But the person who has come to know through the word of God that his heart holds evil thoughts, greed, pride, and all kinds of sins acknowledges that he is a sinner who absolutely needs Jesus Christ.

The words that God desires mercy and not sacrifice mean that one should not try to be recognized by God through formal

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religious ceremonies or good deeds, but should realize that he is a sinner who must receive God's pity and the grace of salvation. God calls not the person who puts forward his own righteousness but the person who acknowledges his sin and weakness and asks for God's mercy.

That Jesus came to call sinners is not in order to leave them as sinners, but to remove their sins and make them righteous. Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body; He bore those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood; and He rose again from the dead, saving sinners completely. Whoever believes in this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins, becomes righteous, and becomes a child of God.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 9:14, what did the disciples of John ask Jesus concerning fasting?

The disciples of John protested to Jesus, asking why His disciples did not fast while they themselves and the Pharisees fasted.

"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?'" (Matthew 9:14).

[Question] 13. In Matthew 9:15–17, what parables did Jesus give as He taught about fasting?

To teach the right attitude toward fasting, Jesus used the following three parables.

The parable of the bridegroom and the wedding guests: He said that while the bridegroom is with them they rejoice, but when the bridegroom is taken away from them, they will fast.

The parable of the unshrunk cloth and the old garment: He said that if a piece of unshrunk cloth is put on an old garment, the garment is torn all the more.

The parable of the new wine and the old wineskins: He said that new wine must be put not into old wineskins but into new wineskins, and then both are preserved.

"And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'" (Matthew 9:15–17).

Jesus taught that fasting is not a mere religious form or duty, but must be practiced according to its meaning and its proper time.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 9:18–19, while Jesus was speaking about fasting, who came to Him, and what did he request?

While Jesus was speaking about fasting, a ruler came to Him and worshiped Him. Although his daughter had just died, he believed that she would live again if Jesus came and laid His hand on her, and so he pleaded with Him.

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"While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples" (Matthew 9:18–19).

Jesus heard his plea, arose, and followed the ruler, and His disciples went with Him.

[Question] 15. In Matthew 9:20, with what faith did the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment touch the Lord?

The woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment was a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years.

"And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment" (Matthew 9:20).

This woman had long been suffering from the flow of blood, but she believed that Jesus could save her, and she came up behind Him and touched the hem of His garment.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 9:21–22, with what faith did the woman with the flow of blood come to Jesus and receive healing?

The woman with the flow of blood believed that she would be saved if she only touched Jesus' garment, and she touched its hem. Jesus saw her faith and declared salvation to her, and the woman was healed of her disease at that very moment.

"For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I

shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour" (Matthew 9:21–22).

The woman came forward with the faith that Jesus could heal her, and by that faith she was saved from her disease.

[Question] 17. Many Christians today try to receive the remission of sins through their own prayers of repentance. What kind of gospel, then, is the gospel of the remission of sins, by which Jesus removed people's sins completely once and for all?

First, something must be clearly distinguished. Offering prayers of repentance is not wrong in itself. Acknowledging one's sins, turning back to God, and confessing one's wrongs are necessary in the life of faith.

But if a person believes that his prayers of repentance are the price that washes away his sins, and that every time he sins he must receive the remission of sins again through prayers of repentance, he comes to rely on his own prayers rather than on the perfect atonement Jesus has already accomplished.

The ground of the remission of sins that the Scriptures speak of is not human tears or the amount of one's prayers, but the salvation Jesus accomplished once and for all with His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection.

1. Repentance begins with believing the gospel

Jesus said as follows.

"Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15).

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Repentance does not mean simply repeating the list of sins one has committed or weeping out of guilt. The heart of gospel repentance is turning from the thought of washing away one's sins with one's own prayers and good deeds, and believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

In true repentance there are changes like the following.

One acknowledges that he is a sinner before God.

One acknowledges that he cannot remove his sins by his own effort.

One lays down his own righteousness and religious merits.

One believes in and relies on the salvation of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Repentance and faith in the gospel are not separated. One must not stop at merely regretting his sins; he must abandon the thought that he can save himself and turn to Jesus.

2. The remission of sins begins with the baptism Jesus received

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist at the Jordan River is extremely important.

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

That Jesus, who has no sin, received baptism was not to wash away His own sins. It was to receive the sin of the world passed on to Him and to fulfill the righteousness of God.

After Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist testified of Him.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

The sin Jesus took on is not the sin of any one person or the sins of the past only; it is *"the sin of the world."* The sins that all people commit throughout their whole lives are included in it.

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the water refers to the fact that Jesus took on the sin of the world by receiving baptism. After taking on the sin of the world, Jesus carried that sin to the Cross.

3. Jesus received the judgment of all sins on the Cross

Jesus was judged on the Cross for the sins He had taken on through His baptism.

"That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

Jesus did not die because of His own sins; He died *"for our sins."* The Cross is not merely an event that showed Jesus' love; it is the event in which He actually bore the wages and the judgment of sin.

On the Cross Jesus spoke His last words.

"It is finished!" (John 19:30).

If Jesus said, *"It is finished,"* then it is not that man must keep supplementing an insufficient atonement with his own prayers of repentance. It is the word that Jesus completely accomplished the bearing of sin and its judgment.

4. The atonement of Jesus is the eternal redemption accomplished once and for all

The sacrifices of the Old Testament had to be offered repeatedly whenever sins were committed. But Jesus offered Himself once as the perfect sacrifice.

"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).

Here there are two important expressions.

They are *"eternal redemption"* and *"once for all."*

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The atonement of Jesus is not a temporary atonement. Nor is it a partial atonement that washed away some sins and left others behind. Jesus offered Himself once and for all to remove sin.

"Now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

Jesus came not merely to cover sin but to *"put away sin."* At the time Jesus died on the Cross, all the sins we have committed up to now were still future sins. Yet Jesus was not crucified again. For by one sacrifice He bore the sins of all ages.

5. By one sacrifice He has perfected forever those who believe

"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

We obtained sanctification not because we offered many prayers of repentance. We have been sanctified *"through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12).

That Jesus sat down at the right hand of God means that the work of atonement has been completed. There is no need to offer another sacrifice for salvation.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

Jesus has not made believers whole for just one day or only until they commit their next sin. As the word says, they are *"perfected forever."*

The assurance of the remission of sins, therefore, does not hang on the question "Have I offered enough prayers of repentance today?" It hangs on the question "Has Jesus taken

on all my sins and received their judgment completely?"

6. The remission of sins is received by believing in Jesus

That Jesus took on the sin of the world does not mean that everyone is automatically saved. One must receive by faith the salvation Jesus accomplished.

"Through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

The faith that receives the remission of sins is not merely acknowledging vaguely that Jesus exists. It is believing with the heart the following facts.

I was a sinner who could not wash away my own sins.

Jesus received my sins passed on to Him by being baptized by John.

Jesus received the judgment of my sins in my place on the Cross.

Jesus rose again from the dead.

Therefore in Jesus my sins have been completely remitted.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not center on what man must do to wash away his sins. It centers on what Jesus has completely accomplished for sinners.

7. Is there then no need to confess after committing a sin?

Not so. Even a person who has received the remission of sins can sin in his weakness, because he still has the flesh. The Scriptures do not teach us to say that we have no sin.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

Even the person who has received the remission of sins must honestly acknowledge his wrongs and confess them before God.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us

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our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

But confession must not be thought of as a new sacrifice of atonement. It is not that Jesus is baptized again or crucified again every time we confess.

The ground of confession, too, is not our tears or sincerity but the blood Jesus has already shed.

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

To confess sin is to admit honestly what God already knows, to turn from the wrong way, and to believe and rely again on the atonement Jesus accomplished. Confession is not an act that pays the price of sin but the attitude of faith that has fellowship with God in the light.

8. Prayers of repentance offered for atonement and confession within the gospel are different

Comparing the two point by point, they are as follows.

The ground of the remission of sins: if one makes prayers of repentance a means of atonement, he puts it in his own tears, resolutions, and prayers; but within the gospel it rests on the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus.

The one who removes sin: in the former case it is the person praying himself, but within the gospel it is Jesus, who completed salvation.

The state of atonement: in the former case it must be received again every time one sins, but within the gospel Jesus has obtained eternal redemption once and for all.

The meaning of confession: in the former case it is the price for washing away sin again, but within the gospel it is acknowledging sin and turning back to God.

The assurance of faith: in the former case it wavers

according to whether one has prayed enough, but within the gospel it rests on the word Jesus has fulfilled.

The place of obedience: in the former case it is a condition for obtaining the remission of sins, but within the gospel it is the fruit that appears after receiving the remission of sins.

9. The remission of sins once and for all does not mean that one may sin freely

The word that Jesus has remitted all sins does not mean that we should take sin lightly. On the contrary, if we believe the fact that Jesus was baptized and died on the Cross because of our sins, we come to know how fearful sin is.

The person who has received the remission of sins does not say that it does not matter if he sins. He hates sin, admits his wrongs, and wants to live according to the word. Only, he does not think that his salvation is canceled and restored every day because of his shortcomings. He places the assurance of salvation not in his own deeds but in the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

The Book of Hebrews states clearly.

"Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin" (Hebrews 10:18).

Conclusion

The gospel of the remission of sins, by which Jesus removed people's sins completely once and for all, is as follows.

It is the gospel that Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him by being baptized by John the Baptist, bore that sin and was judged and died on the Cross, and then rose again, completing the eternal redemption; and that whoever believes this fact receives the remission of all sins not by his

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own works but by the righteousness of Jesus.

Prayers of repentance can neither replace nor supplement this perfect atonement. True repentance is turning from the thought of washing away one's sins with one's own prayers and believing in the salvation Jesus has already accomplished; and confession after being saved is not a price paid to obtain the remission of sins anew, but the attitude of faith that lives honestly in the light before God.

[Question] 18. What differences are there between the person who tries to receive the remission of sins by his own works and the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit given by the Lord?

The greatest difference between the two is not how virtuously they live outwardly or how zealously they lead their religious lives, but whether they place the ground of the remission of sins in their own works or in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

The one tries to complete the remission of sins with his own prayers and good deeds; the other receives by faith the salvation Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection.

1. The person who tries to receive the remission of sins by his own works

The person who tries to receive the remission of sins by his own works may think of the following as conditions for washing away sin: offering enough prayers of repentance, shedding many tears, fasting, giving offerings and serving,

keeping the Law and the commandments well, and doing many good deeds to make up for his sins.

Such a life of faith is not wrong in itself. The problem lies in making these things the ground and the price of the remission of sins.

The Scriptures say that the role of the Law is not to remove man's sins but to make him realize his sins.

"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).

The more a person tries to keep the word of God, the more he discovers his shortcomings and sins. The Law is like a mirror that shows sin, but it is not the water that washes that sin away.

The person who relies on his own works may lead a zealous religious life. But that zeal may not flow from believing the righteousness of God; it may serve to establish his own righteousness.

"They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:2–3).

This person thinks that every time he sins, his salvation has become incomplete again. So when he has prayed his prayers of repentance well, he feels he has received the remission of sins; and when he has not prayed enough, he feels he is still a sinner. His assurance of the remission of sins keeps changing according to his own state and deeds rather than the word of Jesus.

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2. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not look for the ground of the remission of sins in himself; he finds it in Jesus.

When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He said as follows.

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

In the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the water refers to the fact that Jesus took on the sin of the world by receiving baptism. John the Baptist testified of Jesus.

"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

Jesus carried the sin of the world, which He had received and taken on through His baptism, and was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again on the third day. The Holy Spirit testifies that this salvation Jesus accomplished is true.

"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).

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, therefore, looks not so much at "What must I do for my sins to disappear?" as at "How did Jesus remove my sins completely?"

3. The ground of righteousness is different

The person who relies on his own works thinks that his prayers and good deeds help to some degree in becoming

righteous before God.

But the person who believes the gospel acknowledges that he cannot become righteous by his own works and believes in the righteousness of God that Jesus gives.

"Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference" (Romans 3:22).

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

The person who tries to receive the remission of sins by his own works tries to show God his own righteousness. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit acknowledges that he has no righteousness and receives as a gift the righteousness Jesus accomplished.

4. Whether one sees salvation as wages earned by work or as a gift of grace is different

If one thinks of his own works as the condition of salvation, salvation becomes wages for work. But the Scriptures say that salvation is not something that comes from man but the gift of God.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The remission of sins is not a work that God and man complete together. Jesus accomplished it completely, and the sinner receives that fact by faith. Faith, too, is not an act of paying some price to God but receiving with empty hands the gift already given.

5. The assurance of the remission of sins is different

The person who relies on his own works looks at his own

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state.

Did I pray well today?

Did I confess my sins without missing any?

Did I grieve enough and shed enough tears?

Did I live virtuously?

Because the answers to these questions change every day, his assurance of the remission of sins also wavers.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, on the other hand, looks at what Jesus has accomplished.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14).

The baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus do not change according to a person's feelings or conduct. The believer's salvation, therefore, rests not on his own emotions but on the word Jesus has fulfilled.

This assurance is not the self-boast that says, "I am a perfect person who commits no sin." It is faith in Jesus that says, "I am weak, but Jesus has taken on all my sins completely."

6. The attitude toward sin is different

The person who relies on his own works may think that every time he sins he must wash that sin anew with prayers of repentance. So he makes confession another act of atonement.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit also admits his wrongs and confesses when he sins. But he does not think that his confession pays the price of his sin. Believing the atonement Jesus has already completed, he acknowledges his wrongs before God and turns from them.

Even the person who has received the remission of sins can sin in the flesh, and he must not rationalize his wrongs. Only, he does not think that Jesus must be crucified again every time

he sins. He honestly acknowledges his sin, and turns his heart and conduct to live according to the word within the gospel already fulfilled.

7. Good deeds are not the condition of salvation but its fruit

The difference between the two is not that one does good deeds and the other does nothing. The difference lies in why they do good deeds.

The person who relies on his own works does good deeds in order to obtain the remission of sins and salvation.

The person who believes the gospel does good deeds with gratitude because he has already received the remission of sins and salvation.

Immediately after saying that salvation is not of works, the Scriptures say that the saved have been created to do good works.

"We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

Good deeds, therefore, are not the root of salvation but its fruit. It is not that we are saved by doing good deeds; good deeds appear because we have been saved.

"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).

The word of the Book of James does not mean that works wash away sin. It means that true faith bears fruit in one's life. Works are not a merit that pays the price of salvation but the evidence that living faith is in that person.

The differences between the two

Comparing the two point by point, the differences are as follows.

The ground of the remission of sins: the person who relies

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on his own works puts it in prayers, tears, good deeds, and religious efforts; the person who believes the gospel puts it in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus.

The source of righteousness: the one looks for it in his own righteousness; the other finds it in the righteousness of God.

The nature of salvation: for the one it is wages obtained by effort; for the other it is the gift of grace received by faith.

The state of the remission of sins: for the one it keeps changing according to his deeds; for the other it rests on the perfect atonement of Jesus.

Repentance and confession: for the one they are means of washing away sin again; for the other they are acknowledging one's wrongs and turning back to God.

Good deeds: for the one they are conditions for obtaining salvation; for the other they are the fruits that appear after being saved.

Boasting: the one easily boasts of his own zeal; the other boasts only of what Jesus has done.

The center of faith: for the one it lies in "what I have done"; for the other it lies in "what Jesus has accomplished."

Conclusion

The most important difference is not the amount of works but the object of faith and the ground of salvation.

The person who tries to receive the remission of sins by his own works tries to add his own merits to the salvation of Jesus. But the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit lays down his own righteousness and fully believes the salvation Jesus completed by taking on the sin of the world through His baptism and by His Cross and resurrection.

To sum it up in one sentence, it is as follows.

The person who relies on his own works labors to obtain

salvation, but the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives by faith the salvation Jesus has already completed and does good deeds out of gratitude for that grace.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 9:23, what does the scene of the flute players and the noisy crowd at the ruler's house where Jesus arrived show about what was happening at that time?

When Jesus arrived at the ruler's house, the flute players and a noisy crowd wailing loudly were gathered there.

"When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing" (Matthew 9:23).

Because the ruler's daughter had died, flute players and wailing people had gathered and were mourning according to the funeral customs of that day. Here *"the noisy crowd"* means the people who were weeping loudly and wailing in confusion.

[Question] 20. In Matthew 9:24, when Jesus told the crowd to step aside, what did He say about the state of the dead girl?

Jesus told the clamoring, wailing crowd to step aside, and said that the girl was not dead but sleeping.

"He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him" (Matthew 9:24).

Because Jesus would soon bring the girl back to life, He likened her death to sleep. But the crowd did not know the power of Jesus, so they heard His words and ridiculed Him.

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[Question] 21. In Matthew 9:25–26, after the crowd was put outside, what happened when Jesus took the girl by the hand?

After sending the clamoring crowd outside, Jesus went in and took the dead girl by the hand. Then the girl arose.

"But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land" (Matthew 9:25–26).

By taking the girl's hand and raising her from death, Jesus clearly revealed that He is the One who gives life and rules over death. When this became known, the report of it spread into all that land.

[Question] 22. In Matthew 9:27, whose son did the two blind men who cried out, "Have mercy on us!" call Jesus?

The two blind men called Jesus the *"Son of David."*

"When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!'" (Matthew 9:27).

"Son of David" is a title that refers to the Savior whom God had promised to send, that is, the Messiah. The two blind men believed that Jesus was the Messiah who could heal them, and they pleaded with Him to have mercy on them.

[Question] 23. Explain in order the plea and the faith of the two blind men and the healing of Jesus shown in Matthew 9:27–30.

The two blind men followed Jesus, crying out, *"Son of David, have mercy on us!"* When Jesus went into the house, they also came to Him, and Jesus asked them whether they believed that He could open their eyes. The two answered that they believed.

Then Jesus touched their eyes and told them that it would be to them according to their faith, and the eyes of the two blind men were opened.

"When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.'" (Matthew 9:27–30).

The two blind men kept following Jesus and pleading, and by confessing their faith that Jesus could heal them, they came to see.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 9:30–31, what did Jesus sternly warn the two men who had received their sight?

After healing the two blind men, Jesus sternly charged them not to let anyone know about this.

"And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned

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them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.' But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country" (Matthew 9:30–31).

But the two men went out and spread the news about Jesus in all that land.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 9:32–34, what miracle did Jesus perform for the demon-possessed man who could not speak, and how did the people respond to it?

When people brought to Jesus a man who was demon-possessed and mute, Jesus cast out the demon. Then the man who could not speak came to speak.

"As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.'" (Matthew 9:32–34).

The responses of the people were divided in two.

The multitudes marveled and said that nothing like this had ever been seen in Israel.

The Pharisees criticized Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons.

[Question] 26. Explain the ministry of preaching the gospel and healing that Jesus carried out as He went about all the cities and villages, as recorded in Matthew 9:35.

Jesus went about all the cities and villages and did the following things.

He taught the word in the synagogues.

He preached the gospel of the kingdom.

He healed every disease and every infirmity.

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matthew 9:35).

The ministry of Jesus consisted of teaching the word, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing the sick and the weak.

[Question] 27. In Matthew 9:36, why did Jesus have compassion on the multitudes?

The reason Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitudes was that they were struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

Here, that He was "moved with compassion" means that He pitied the multitudes and had deep mercy on them. The people were wandering in sin and suffering without having met a true shepherd to lead them to the truth and the way of salvation.

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Jesus saw the state of such souls and had compassion on them.

[Question] 28. In Matthew 9:37–38, what did Jesus tell His disciples to do in the situation where the laborers for the harvest were few?

Jesus commanded His disciples to pray to God, the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers for the harvest.

"Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'" (Matthew 9:37–38).

He taught that since there are many souls who must be saved but few workers to preach the gospel, we must plead with God to raise up and send out workers of the gospel. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who came to me, a paralytic, and saved me

< Matthew 9:1-8 >

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

How are you? It is truly good to see you. There are many things that we cannot do well as we have made up our minds to do. We set our minds this way and that, but in many things our thoughts, our bodies, and our actions fail to follow what we have resolved. So we constantly make resolutions about ourselves. We resolve and even vow, thinking, 'I must do this,' or, 'I did wrong this time, so next time I must do better.' This is what all people have in common. To be human is precisely to be unable

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to live as one has made up one's mind.

We cannot live as we make up our minds

So people make many mistakes in life. They say to themselves and to others, 'I knew this would happen.' They are often disappointed with the results of their own work, thinking things would turn out one way when they turned out another. What shall we call all this? We call it a disease. We also call it weakness. And among diseases, one particularly nasty disease is palsy.

We usually think that palsy strikes only the body. We think that the elderly suffer from palsy and the young do not. In fact, that is usually the case. Seeing the particular cases, we assume it is always so.

We are all spiritual paralytics

Spiritually, however, everyone is struck with palsy, whether young in age or old in years. All of us are paralytics. Young or old, beautiful or not, everyone is a paralytic. It is because things do not go as we make up our minds. Because we want to do one thing and it does not go as we have resolved, we human beings live in regret. That is why we are spiritual paralytics.

Now, in today's passage there appears the event in which Jesus heals a paralytic. People brought a paralytic lying on a bed to Jesus. That he lay on a bed means that he could not move about. This paralytic may have been a man who could not even lift a spoon with his own hand and put food into his mouth. He may have been a man whose limbs twisted whenever he tried to

move, so that it took him a long time just to grasp a spoon and a long while more to bring that spoon to his mouth. He may have been a man who caused worry and pain to many people around him. Such a paralytic the people brought, lying on his bed.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."* It seems it would have been truly easy for Jesus to say to this paralytic, 'Your disease is healed,' but He said, *"your sins are forgiven you."* And the paralytic sprang up. His disease was healed. Reading the whole passage, we can see that it was at these words Jesus spoke to him that his disease was healed.

"Your sins are forgiven you"

The paralytic is a person whose heart wills, but who cannot move as he wills. So are we, and so is everyone. Yet the Lord told him that he had received the remission of his sins. Why did He say that? He could have said, 'Arise and walk,' or, 'You are healed.' Since Jesus is God, whatever He says, He can bring it to pass just as He has spoken. Then why, of all things, did He say, *"Your sins are forgiven you"*?

Physiologically speaking, a paralytic is a person who cannot move his body properly. When Jesus told him that his sins had been remitted, the man who received this word rose up and walked about, and he shouldered by himself the bed he had been lying on and returned home. This is the evidence of salvation. This paralytic now became a person who could do something. The man who could do nothing became a man who could; the man who had only ever failed became a man who could also succeed. The man who could not even eat properly lying down became a man who could rise and eat by himself, wash his own

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body, and get up again even when he fell.

Then what does this tell us? It is the word the Lord spoke, that your sins have been remitted. He is telling us that it is because of our sins that we are this imperfect. Therefore the Lord came to remove our sins. He came to save those who are like the paralytic—those who keep falling into sin and falling into weakness and can only go to hell—from their sins. He came to do the work of removing our sins and making us able to do new things, and He accomplished that work.

Brothers and sisters, we collapse often. Even when we set our hearts right, we fail to carry it into action; we try for two or three days, or for a month, and soon that resolution breaks and we fall again. But when we receive the remission of sins, we can start anew even though we have failed. God came to this earth and removed your sins and mine. If we believe in this God, we become people who can attempt new things, live new lives, and do righteous works, regardless of our past failures.

That is why our Lord came to this earth. Why did the Lord come to this earth? Why did the Lord come and meet and heal the crippled, the lame, the paralytics, the lepers, and the dead? It was to tell us to live a new life, to tell us that we too can do it. When God solves our problem of sin, we can do new things. The Lord came to make us people who can do so. I know that the Lord truly came to this earth and healed you and me, who had become paralytics, from sin and from disease. And so I believe.

Because Jesus is God, before Jesus there is no problem at all in healing a paralytic, a dead person, the lame, or a leper. For He is almighty. Still more, there is no worry at all in His removing our sins. It does not matter whether our sins are many or few. We must only believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came from heaven, that He is God. When we believe and accept that all the works this One did are the works God did, and that He

removed your sins and mine with His own blood, there is nothing impossible there. Even one who can only harbor evil thoughts and bear only bad fruits, He can make into a righteous person who lives for what is pure, bright, and right. That is who Jesus is.

The Lord who removed our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Therefore we are saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord called the paralytic *"Son."* The word son here means a very small one. To be of good cheer means to be at ease, to have peace in one's heart, not to worry. It means that He has solved everything, so tie up all your worries. He is saying: 'I have come to this earth to remove your sins. I have already taken on your sins with the baptism I received from John; in a little while I will hang on the Cross and receive all the judgment of your sins for you; and I will die and live again and become your God. I am your Shepherd and your Savior. Will you believe? Will you receive it?' This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Why did Jesus not give help to those who were whole and seek to win their recognition, but instead come to people like this paralytic and heal such people? We must realize this. The Lord wanted to reveal that He is God to people like the paralytic, to those who could do nothing. He did so to heal the diseases of sick people who were as good as dead, to bestow such grace on them, and to have them live in peace, giving thanks forever. We must never forget this.

Truly we must give thanks to the Lord who came to this paralytic. Why? Because we ourselves were paralytics.

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I, too, was a paralytic

I, too, was a paralytic. It was my creed not to tell lies, and it was another creed of mine to look on gold as if it were stone. So in the old days, even when I saw money or a piece of gold fallen on the road, I took care not to become a man who leaned too much toward money and coveted it. I thought that if I became a man clean with money, I could act like a proper human being. I strove hard to become such an upright person, and I did my best not to tell lies.

But I came to learn that when refusing to lie brings enormous disadvantage, and when something approaches that would deal a fatal wound to one's life in this world, one cannot help telling lies. Though I vowed not to do it, though I set my will and made my resolution, it did not work. I had thought I could move myself as I willed, but as I lived on, I learned that I was one who could not move himself as he willed.

Long ago I thought that I at least could live as a clean man with money and with many other matters. But as I grew older, I came to know that I was not so either. That became a great wound to me. What would have been only a small wound to others became an enormous wound to me. When a person blames and torments himself too much over what he has done wrong, he can even fall ill mentally. The devil comes and accuses without ceasing, asking when, where, and how you sinned. I had thought I could control myself, but when I realized the fact that I could not move myself as I willed and collapsed into sin, it was a truly great wound.

At that time the devil whispered that rather than living in such torment, I should simply die. There was even a time when my thoughts went as far as this: would it not be more comfortable simply to die than to live in such anguish? But the

conclusion is that I, too, was a paralytic. Are you not the same? Are there not things that turned out a certain way though you had determined not to do them? Then you, too, are paralytics.

Yet that Lord came to find you and me. He came to find us, and what did He do? Did He just say, 'Found you,' and end there? No. He told us: 'I was born on this earth to bear your sins; I received baptism from John and took your sins passed on to Me; to receive the judgment of your sins I will carry the wages of your sins, be nailed to the Cross, and die; and to become your God and guarantee your salvation I will live again.' And the Lord actually did so. We give thanks before the Lord. For we were like sick people who were as good as dead.

The Son of Man, who has the authority to remit sins

Even so, the people of the world call Jesus arrogant. In today's passage some of the scribes said within themselves, "This Man blasphemes!" To blaspheme here means to be exceedingly arrogant. They thought, 'Who are you to dare to remit sins?' Brothers and sisters, here is an important point. There is a hidden picture in the Scriptures. If Jesus had been no more than a human being, when He spoke like this He would at once have been called arrogant and treated as a madman. Even in the world, one who talks vainly as if he were somebody is restrained by law and sometimes locked up.

In the world there are many who claim they are good at politics, and many who claim to be righteous. Even among Christians—among those called senior deaconesses, deacons, elders, and pastors—there are those who believe and preach that when Jesus remitted sins, He remitted only the past sins, and that

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the sins to be committed from now on are remitted one by one each time one offers prayers of repentance. But Jesus remits all at once. Jesus is the Man among men and God. He is the perfect King. When He says, 'I have remitted your sins,' He remits sins eternally. It is not that He remits sins today, and if we sin tomorrow we become sinners again. God is not such a being. God has His justice, and that justice is also merciful.

So Jesus spoke to those who harbored such evil thoughts and called Him arrogant. He asked, *"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?"* Which of these two sentences would be easier? People naturally consider the words 'Arise and walk' easier. They think that is something a man might attempt to say, even with some bluster in it. But the words that your sins have been remitted can be spoken by no one but God. Only God can say, 'All your sins are gone; I remit your sins.'

Who is Jesus? Jesus is God. Because He is God, though He came to this earth as a man clothed in a human body, He can say to a paralytic, 'I have remitted your sins,' and remove his sins; He can say, 'Arise and walk'; He can raise the dead; and He can heal lepers. Such things are possible because He is God—who on this earth could do such things? We must believe this fact, that Jesus is God. Jesus is not a mere religious leader. Jesus is God. He is the great God who transcends this earth and all time and space. God so loved the world—loved you and me—that He came as a man. It was to make us God's children, people without sin.

We must believe this and we must know this. Jesus says in verse 6, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."* The Son of Man here refers to the One who, being God, became a man. Sakyamuni, Confucius, and Socrates were originally human beings. But Jesus is originally

God, and to save mankind from sin He was born on this earth, borrowing the body of a woman. That is why He is called the Son of Man. These words—that He wants you to know that the Son of Man, Jesus, has the authority to remit sins in this world—mean precisely, 'I am God.' Jesus is God. Do you believe?

Because He is God, He remitted your sins and mine. Because He is God, the work He did for you and me—coming to this earth, receiving baptism from John and taking on our sins, dying on the Cross and rising again to save you and me—has its power. If He were not God, what power would that work have? It would have no power at all. But He is God. He is the eternal God. Seeing this, the people feared and glorified God, who had given such authority to men. If Jesus had been a mere human being, as a man He could not remit sins. Jesus came in the form of a man, but His fundamental essence is God. God lowered Himself like a man and saved us from sin.

Jesus is the God of love

So when we call on Jesus—that is, on God—we call Him the God of love. He is a truly good God. That is why people today wear crosses around their necks. The cross is the symbol of love. Because it is the symbol of the love with which God loved man—you and me—people proudly wear the cross. Is that not so? If the cross had been not the symbol of love but the symbol of a curse, who would do so? Galatians says that everyone who hangs on a tree is under a curse.

In the Roman era of Jesus' day, those who committed the most heinous crimes were sentenced to be nailed to a cross so that the blood of the heart all flowed out and they died on the tree. It was called the most dreadful judgment. Jesus hung on

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that tree. Why was He hung there? He was hung because He had taken on your sins and mine with the baptism He received from John. Jesus poured out all the blood in His heart, said, “It is finished,” and died. And on the third day after entering the tomb, He rose again. An angel rolled away the stone door, and Jesus, having risen, appeared to His disciples. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that saved us.

When we say ‘Lord,’ it means my Savior who is God. So you may pray, ‘Jesus, my God.’ Though we are apt to fall into confusion, we call Jesus God. Jesus came to this earth as God and saved you and me, who had been struck with the disease of sin like palsy. God could easily have remitted our sins with a word alone. But not with a word only: He personally took on our sins in His own body with the baptism He received from John, personally bore the merciless suffering of the Cross to the point of death, and rose again, actually saving you and me. Because Jesus is a truly just One, He did not love us in word only but saved you and me from sin by His own righteous deed.

Therefore there is no reason at all for us not to believe. If we still cannot believe, it is because the devil has come into our hearts and keeps whispering, ‘Do not believe it, do not believe it.’ Brothers and sisters, do you believe that Jesus removed all your sins and saved you?

True faith and the life of the born-again

Even after believing, we must know that Jesus is God, and when we pray to Him, we must know the fact that we are praying to God. And we must also know the fact that He who is God answers us. This is true faith. We open the same Bible and share the word, but a person who is not born again speaks useless talk.

If even a little philosophical talk or other useless talk enters into the preaching of God's word, it cannot become the word of God. Then, though one hears the word, one cannot be saved. Jesus is God. Yet even among the pastors on this earth, the majority do not believe that Jesus is God.

In the days gone by when our nation was taken from us, there was a time when people were seized and made to bow and pay homage to a so-called sun god. It was an idolatrous rite requiring people to bow in worship before a deity. At that time there were ministers who refused, kept the faith, and even suffered martyrdom. On the other hand, many pastors of that day bathed, dressed in formal attire, went forward and bowed, and even took the lead in it. One minister who left this world not long ago also confessed with his own mouth, 'I am a man who has sinned much.' It was because he had said that Jesus is not God and something else is, and had bowed before it.

Of course, since we are human, such weakness can be understood. But because the great majority were not born again, the moment threats were applied they turned straight from Jesus to philosophy and sought another way. A holy person, however, is different when tribulation comes and such a situation actually unfolds. We too feel fear, but the Holy Spirit who is in us holds us firmly, makes us speak what must be spoken, and makes us respond boldly, so that the people of the world cannot withstand us. Even when they coax, saying that if we bow our heads just once they will let us live well, the born-again refuse it. When the last era comes and the time of martyrdom arrives, the born-again are plainly different.

Brothers and sisters, not only in such times but also in ordinary times, the born-again are completely different. Do you know how they differ? Whatever work they do, they work with the mind of an owner. With the heart of a master—thinking,

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‘God has entrusted this work to me, so I am its keeper’—they work, concerned lest there be a loss or lest anyone be hurt. That is the difference between the person who is born again and the person who is not. Though they seem alike in believing in Jesus, the person who does not believe in Jesus as God and has no owner’s mind deceives the eye. But the person who truly believes in Jesus as his Savior, who believes that Jesus is God and that this God saved you and me from sin, is different. This is a true gentleman.

We used to call the English gentlemen, because they behaved properly, like gentlemen, even when no one was watching. In truth they were not always so, but we are truly genuine gentlemen. We are gentlemen of the kingdom of heaven. Even when no one watches, we act like gentlemen. The one who benefits God, gives joy to the brothers and sisters, makes the other person glad even when he himself is slighted, and says, ‘I am your friend and your family’—he is a true gentleman.

Believe in Jesus as God

God the Father entrusted this work to Jesus. So Jesus, upholding the Father’s will—being God in His fundamental nature yet clothed in human flesh—came to this earth, received baptism from John and took on all the sins of the world passed on to Him, said, “It is finished,” died on the Cross, and rose again, and He said, ‘I will come again; preach this gospel.’ He told us to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Himself came to this earth, took on our sins through the baptism He received from John, was hung on the Cross to die, and rose from the dead, saving us. And He said to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that He has

commanded us. Brothers and sisters, we must become disciples. A disciple must follow just as his Teacher did. Do you understand? Truly I give thanks.

If you do not want to go wrong, believe in Jesus. Know that Jesus is God, and know that His removing all your sins with the baptism He received from John was because He loved you. How much did He love you? Believe. Then you become gentlemen of the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing for us to do. There is nothing but to believe with the heart. What could the paralytic do? There was nothing but to believe. This paralytic heard the Lord's declaration of the remission of sins, "Son, your sins have been remitted," and believed in Jesus. Only when we know that Jesus is God can we be saved. It is truly simple. Brothers and sisters, do you understand?

A sermon like this cannot be heard anywhere else you may go, however many pastors there may be on this earth. You may think it is the same kind of sermon, but this word that rightly preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not so common. Believe while I am preaching this gospel rightly. It must never happen that one who is not born again comes in and plays the captain, oppresses those who do not obey, curries favor with material things, and finally degrades you into people who serve man rather than people who serve God. You would not want to become like that. If you do not want to, believe in Jesus as God. People all look like the same people, but you must also know the fact that they are by no means the same. Believe it. If you believe, you will be saved. I believe that you believe. Brothers and sisters, do you believe? ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Only Jesus can remit sins

< Matthew 9:1-8 >

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

The three elements that make up worship

There are three elements in worship. The first is hearing the word of God: hearing and believing what God says and what the Lord's command is. The second is prayer: coming to God and pleading with Him to help us. The third is praise. Praise is testimony. It is laying my faith before God, carried on a melody. It is confessing that the Lord has saved me like this, that I believe the Lord will come again, and that I praise that Lord like this. These three are the elements of worship.

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Yet some among us, on the excuse that the body is tired, keep their mouths shut and their eyes closed at the time of praise and do not sing. At prayer, too, they pass over it carelessly. When hearing the word, they listen halfheartedly. If we do so, that worship is not true worship.

Praise is the testimony of salvation

When we offer praise, we are laying out our testimony of salvation. We confess that this is what I believe, and that the Lord has saved me like this. Therefore the time of praise is truly important. The time of prayer is truly important. So is the time of hearing the word. In the time of hearing the word, we can hear what God has done and what He will do, and the commands He gives us. We can hear what God is saying to me now, in this season.

Therefore the person who worships without offering praise properly has already lost half of the worship. Since there is no testimony, his hearing of the word is not refreshing either, and that worship cannot become whole worship.

Worship is the blessing that joins God and us

We easily regard worship as something we may offer or may not offer. But it is not so. Gathering together at this hour of worship to praise God, to pray, and to hear the word is a truly important thing and a great blessing. There are also those who worked with us and then went out into the world to live. If they really believed the word of God and believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, how could they treat worship carelessly?

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To forsake worship is to be cut off from God. The Lord said that whatever is bound on this earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever is loosed on this earth will be loosed in heaven. The person who already takes his leave of God on this earth is leaving God already on this earth. He does not part from God after going to hell; he makes himself God's enemy on this earth. Everything is accomplished on this earth.

True testimony is offered before God

Brothers and sisters, how should testimony be given? Must it always be spoken with the mouth, coming out before people? In some churches that claim to have no sin of their own, they hold testimony rallies. They call people out to the front and have them testify. But when they do so, a mind arises that does not want to be outdone. If someone comes forward and testifies that he has resolved to sell his house and give it, a person sitting there, feeling he cannot do less, steps up to offer something greater. In fact, that is nothing more than one method of drawing money out of people.

As people testify in competition with one another like that, they even borrow money they do not have to give offerings, and in the end their households are sometimes ruined. Such churches build great chapels with that money. But true testimony is not such a thing. True testimony is offered before God, through praise. That is why I do not do the work of calling people out to testify at the hour of worship.

Jesus, who proclaimed the remission of sins to the paralytic

The word we read today is the word of Matthew chapter 9. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*. Then the people around Him sneered. The scribes said within themselves, *"This Man blasphemes!" (Matthew 9:3)* They meant, 'Who is he to dare to act as God?' It was not Jesus' disciples but the scribes at His side who sneered inwardly.

But Jesus is truly God. Jesus is the Christ, the King of kings, the Creator, God, the Judge, and the Savior. Yet those who did not know Him slandered Jesus as arrogant.

Jesus knew their thoughts and asked them this: which would be easier, to say to this paralytic, *"Your sins are forgiven you,"* or to say, *"Arise and walk" (Matthew 9:5)*? Of course, for a human being it is also impossible to raise a sick man and make him walk. But since among false ones there are those who now and then perform strange feats, in people's eyes that word could look rather easier.

But the words *"Son, your sins are forgiven you" (Mark 2:5)* are words that a human being can never speak. No human being can say to another person that his sins have been remitted. Yet Jesus spoke this way. He proclaimed it so that people would know that the Son of Man has the authority to remit sins on earth.

Only Jesus can remit sins

Only the Lord could remit sins; no human being could say such a thing. Let us think of those who are called great sages on this earth. Could the one who was born a prince in a small

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country of India and became a great teacher say to people, ‘I remit your sins’? He could not. Did the famous sage of the East say, ‘I remit your sins’? Did the great philosopher of the West speak such words? No one could say, ‘I remit a man’s sins.’

But Jesus is different. To those who truly believe in Jesus as the Christ, as the Savior, and as the Judge—to those who believe what the Lord has done—Jesus commands, ‘I remit your sins.’ Then those sins are remitted. When the Lord remits them, so it comes to pass.

This paralytic received the remission of his sins, shouldered his bed, and returned home. *“Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men” (Matthew 9:8)* God the Father gave all this authority to His Son. He gave Him the authority to save mankind from sin, the authority of the Creator who made the whole universe, and the authority to judge.

We believe in Jesus the Christ as our Savior. Jesus received baptism from John and took on all the sins of the world; He was nailed to the Cross and died, receiving for us the judgment of sin; and He rose from the dead, accomplishing our salvation completely. Therefore we have been saved by faith. We praise that God has saved us with the water and the blood. We confess that God has saved us with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has made us His workers and His evangelists. We testify that God has heard our prayers and has granted us the kingdom of heaven. To confess and testify by faith like this is precisely worship.

The time has come to preach the gospel to the whole world

I believe that before long the gospel will be preached even as

far as Europe. If we board a train in our country, we pass through North Korea and reach Russia, and past Russia the way is joined to the many countries of Europe. This way is what God desires even before it is what man desires. Right now that way is not opening well, but I believe this will be accomplished. And I am setting my hopes on the young ones who come after me. I will send you to that land.

When we go up to that land and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they are people just like this paralytic. We preach the gospel to them. We proclaim that Jesus came to save you with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that He is the Christ, the King of kings, the Creator, God, and the Savior.

Jesus came to this earth, received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross and died shedding His blood, and rose from the dead and is alive even now. We proclaim that He has saved you in this way. The person who hears this news and believes in God believes this gospel and receives the remission of sins. Like this paralytic, he receives the remission of sins and praises God and gives thanks. But some people sneer at us. They mock, asking who we are to talk about sins being remitted or not remitted, and how a man could know such a thing.

But Jesus knows, and we also know. The person who truly receives this gospel into his heart is saved and receives the remission of sins. For it is the work Christ did, the work God did, the work the Savior did. If one believes the ministry by which He received baptism from John, took on the sin of the world, and received all its judgment for us, it is salvation; if one does not believe, it is destruction. These things will all take place in Europe, and in this Asia as well. This word is what our Lord did when He came to this earth two thousand years ago, but when we preach the gospel in the days to come, exactly the same

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things will happen. Brothers and sisters, do you believe this? It is truly an amazing thing. Now that time has almost fully come.

The world is changing fast. In some countries the state seeks to manage and control all the information of individuals. Things have even gone so far as planting a mark in the human body to verify every transaction and every entry and exit one by one. The time the Scriptures speak of is drawing near before our eyes. Therefore the time has now fully come for us to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We are preaching the gospel through literature as well. Into countries where printed materials do not enter easily, we go in ourselves to preach the gospel, and we also preach through electronic books. When this preparation is accomplished, I believe it will be a time sufficient for the Lord to come and sufficient for the Lord to judge. Then the Lord will come. Then the Antichrist will appear, and we will see with our own eyes what we speak of from the Scriptures. This is what will happen in the future, and it will surely happen before long.

Let us live testifying our faith through praise

While we can worship and praise to our hearts' content like this, offer your testimony through praise. If you do not offer testimony through praise, that faith is as good as dead. Moreover, this praise given to us is truly precious praise, the only one of its kind in all the world. When you offer praise, testify your faith to God. Ask God for help by faith, and receive God's commands and God's will by faith. Believe. If we live so and then enter the Lord's kingdom, we will live forever, just as Christ lives forever. Live with such faith. We thank God for giving us this blessing. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Take heart, you have received the remission of your sins

< Matthew 9:1-8 >

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

The grace of the remission of sins the Lord has given us

Meeting the paralytic, the Lord blessed him, saying, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2)*. Jesus has already saved all people from their sins. He has removed all sins. Therefore before Jesus there is no one who has sin. Only, according to the difference of whether one receives

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this or does not receive it, one either has sin or has no sin.

What shall we call this? It is the grace of God. It is the gift God has given. The remission of sins God bestows on all people is grace. It is the gift God has given to all mankind, to you and me. So we must confess, and so we must believe.

Truly God has granted the remission of sins to us all. Jesus already received all our sins passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John, and He received the judgment of all those sins on the Cross, shedding His blood. Thus He has made us more than sufficient to become the righteous, to become God's people, to become God's children, and to become God's workers.

Blessed are those who believe this fact. If there is anyone who does not yet believe, he must now believe. Only when we have faith can we please God. Only when we have faith can we live following God's blessing, live faithfully before God, and also share blessings with others.

The Scriptures do not say that the Lord, meeting the paralytic, went through some procedure to accomplish the remission of his sins. As soon as Jesus met the paralytic, He declared outright, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you" (Matthew 9:2).* Just as one who has authority, one who has power, cancels a poor man's debt once and for all, so He accomplished it all at once. This is the power of God. This is the blessing of God. God does not question us by the six principles of who, when, where, what, how, and why. He simply tells us: 'I received all your sins passed on to Me with the baptism I received from John, and I received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and so I have removed all your sins.'

The remission of sins accomplished with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The Lord has caused us to be born again with the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord speaks to us like this: 'I came to this earth for you; for you I received baptism from John and took on your sins; carrying the sin of the world, I was nailed to the Cross and received all the judgment of sin; for you I rose from the dead in three days; and as your God I am alive now and forever.'

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus received the sin of the world passed on to Him once and for all with the baptism He received from John, was judged for that sin on the Cross and died shedding His blood, and completed our salvation by rising again from the dead. Therefore the Lord says, 'I am your Savior. I am your God.' The Lord has spoken to us and blessed us in this way.

We must receive this fact by faith and begin from faith. Brothers and sisters, has the Lord removed all your sins and mine, or has He not? Has He saved us, or has He not? We must live with the faith that believes that the Lord has given us all the gifts: the gift of salvation, the gift of eternal life, the gift of becoming God's children, and the gift of being able to live for the righteousness of God. We must follow the Lord by faith, believe by faith, and live by faith. Today's passage is telling us exactly this.

Receive it by faith and discern those who are false

The sins of all people have been removed. The Lord has removed all your sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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Is it so, or is it not? Only, because this gospel is delivered through men, some use it to take their own gain. But when you meet a true worker of God, he received it freely, and so he passes it on freely just as it is, so that people believe and are saved. He demands no price of any kind while preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. There are those who preach purely like this, and there are those who do not.

Therefore we must discern well. We must discern those who are false, live by faith, and keep going forward by faith. I, too, met the Lord and keep going forward by faith. You also must live in this way.

God, who has the authority to remit sins

Looking at this Scripture, we see that the scribes said within themselves that this man blasphemes. They criticized Jesus, asking how He could say that He had remitted and removed someone's sins. Those who spoke like that did so because they did not believe in Jesus.

Who is Jesus? He is God, who can remit sins. He is the One who has the authority and the power to remove our sins, the sins of all mankind, your sins and mine. He made us, He established the Law, He prepared eternal life, and He prepared salvation. So He is God, who has the power to meet us and remit the sins of all people. That is why He can speak such words. He is qualified to do so.

Yet some people call this blasphemy. They say, 'You are not qualified—how can you say such things?' But Jesus is the One who is qualified. He is qualified to remit our sins, and He is the One who has actually remitted our sins.

Brothers and sisters, only God can remit a man's sins—could

a man remit them? Only the person who has first received the remission of sins from God can deliver this news to another person. How could a person who has not received the remission of sins deliver this news? Preaching only theory without believing is vain. Ask a man who has only theory, 'Is it really true?' three times in a row, and he loses his strength. But the person who really believes has the faith to say that it is so, even if he is asked a million times.

The kingdom of God is not in word but in power. Why is there that power? Because the Lord has removed my sins and your sins with the water and the blood. Because it is a fact, we can answer that it is so, though asked a million times. The Lord—my God and my Savior—has removed my sins with the water and the blood.

Some ask how there can be no sin, when it is written, *"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).* Then I answer like this: 'You speak so because you do not know what Jesus has done, but I am a man who believes in Jesus and believes what Jesus has done. God has removed all my sins—how could I have sin? Rather, I want to ask you in return: how can you have sin when you say you believe in Jesus?' If one truly believes in Jesus, one has no sin.

When I met people who had fallen into heresies, I also spoke that way: Jesus has removed my sins, and so I have no sin. This is not merely an experience of years gone by. Even now, in the present, I have no sin. So I can preach before you in the present tense, and I can do in the present tense the works that God delights in. God has removed my sins, and He has removed your sins too. I want to observe what work God desires to do on this earth now, and live in step with it. And when my ability does not reach, I ask for help. You also are such people. Brothers and sisters, is that so?

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Our weakness, like that of the paralytic

People think like this: which would be easier, for Jesus to say to the paralytic that his sins have been remitted, or to say to him to take up his mat, rise, and walk? To human thinking, treating the legs, giving restorative medicine, and operating to straighten the bent legs so that he walks looks rather more possible. The work of remitting sins—being able to say, 'You have no sin; you have received the remission of your sins'—no one on this earth can do. Therefore we can stand in that place only as people who have received the remission of sins; as merely ordinary people we cannot stand there.

Nevertheless the Lord, calling Himself the *"Son of Man"* who came to this earth clothed in human flesh, said, *"That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6)*. He is saying: 'I want you to know; I want you to know that I have the authority to remit sins.' The Lord truly wanted us to know it.

And so this paralytic, believing, received the remission of his sins. Brothers and sisters, however hard a paralytic may try, can he work like a whole person? Palsy is a disease that begins in the brain. When trouble arises in the right brain, paralysis comes to the left side of the body; when trouble arises in the left brain, the right side of the body twists. The arm bends crooked, and though he tries to speak straight, the words do not come out straight. It is a truly hard disease.

Could this man really make his conduct upright, believe in the Lord, and receive the remission of sins that way? Could he play the part of a whole person? When the Lord looks at us human beings, we are all like that. We are all like paralytics. We are all lacking people. There is nothing whole in us. There is not one whole thing in our hearts, our thoughts, or our deeds. For we

seem fine for a moment and soon return to the abnormal; we realize something for a moment and are soon shaken by other influences. Is that not so? Rather than putting on a hypocritical front, it is better for us simply to admit that it is so.

Only by faith are we made whole

Before God, the poor in spirit receive blessing. Those who mourn receive blessing. The person who rightly knows his own true self knows that fixing himself by his own strength is utterly impossible. But there is exactly one way to become whole. It is possible only by faith.

Faith that believes what? It is the faith that believes in Jesus, the faith that believes what Jesus has done for us, and the faith that believes that the Lord gives us His power and makes us whole. We must go forward with that faith. We can become whole people by faith. Brothers and sisters, is that so? Apart from faith we can never become whole.

All people are the same. The one who claims to be superior soon falls, and the one called inferior can also do well for a little while. That is how people swing back and forth. But we have no time to soak in sentiment. For we have many things to think about and many things in which to serve.

From now on we will do many more works. We will supplement many things again and do far more than we have done until now. We will send far more books and gather far more workers. God does so. All over the world, fellow workers will rise up like bamboo shoots after rain. If until now we have laid the foundation, I know that from now on it will be the season of harvest. The season of the spiritual harvest has come around.

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What comes after being saved matters more

The world is hard and difficult, but the Lord says to the paralytic, *"Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house" (Matthew 9:6)*. The paralytic who had always lain on his bed now sprang up, shouldered his bed, and went home. The Lord made him live a whole life.

Brothers and sisters, what comes after receiving the remission of sins is the more important issue: whether one lives for oneself or lives for God. At a previous worship service an evangelist, delivering the message, said that his work is to know the will of the One who entrusted the work to him, to unite with His heart, and to do the work that fits it. After we are saved, become God's children by faith, and receive the remission of sins, what must we now do?

Will I live according to my own will, or according to the Lord's will? We must think about what the Lord desires of us, make the right decision, and live the life the Lord desires. We must live a life that pleases the Lord's heart. To live for one's own desires after receiving salvation is a great problem. It is like picking and eating the fruit and then turning away, saying, 'I have nothing more to do with you.'

The person who knows what the One who saved him—his Master and his God—desires of him, and serves faithfully to accomplish His will, is a believer in the proper sense. That is the fitting attitude of heart for one who has been saved and received grace. Such a person is one who fears God. He confesses: 'If it is a work You desire of me, I can do anything. If You whom I love, You who love me, desire something of me, I will do anything.' That is faith, and that is belief.

But if someone who has received salvation says, 'What need do I now have of You? I will live my own life,' that is betrayal.

The Lord calls such a person a betrayer and never entrusts him with work. Why would that be? Because even if the work were entrusted to him, he would do his own work, not the Lord's work. To a person who does only his own work, how could the Lord entrust work? Would you entrust it? Therefore our attitude of heart must change.

To live upholding the Lord's will is true faith

There are people who say that although they believe the gospel, they do not see why they should give up all their rights for the Lord. But that is the thought of one who is spiritually foolish. However outstanding one's worldly knowledge may be, if he seeks his own gain through the work of God, he is a spiritually foolish person. Should he seek only his own gain like that and live his whole life on it?

A wise person devotes himself with all his life to the work the Lord desires. And so he receives and enjoys, in due season, all that the Lord possesses. He lives a life of receiving and enjoying, together with the Lord, immeasurably more than the filling of his own greed. The one who does so is the wise one. For the person who lives upholding the Lord's will with spiritual wisdom, everything the Lord has becomes his.

But the person who, after receiving salvation, does not live the life the Lord desires but lives the life he himself desires, ends there. He takes with him only as much as he gained through it—his one life—and nothing more. And in the end he drifts farther and farther away from God.

Do you want a life where you share one purse with the Lord, or do you want to carry your own purse separately and live alone? Man's purse is very small. But God's purse is unspeakably large.

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Therefore we must enlarge the size of our thinking, that is, the size of our faith. We must not stop, satisfied with small things, but look to the great and eternal things God possesses.

Even the precious things of this world are truly small compared with the world of God. In God's world there is the world of heaven beyond this world. I want to hold what is great and abundant together with God, to share it out and serve generously with it, and then to enter the kingdom of God. And I desire to live a life of enjoying all that God possesses. This is my faith.

Work is not something everyone does equally well. Each person has work that fits his own aptitude. Yet whatever work we are entrusted with, we need only be faithful for God, for the Lord whom I love. Then the Lord accomplishes His will.

We must live upholding the will of the One who saved you and me and remitted your sins and mine. We need only live with that heart, with that faith, and with that attitude. Do you understand? What else would the Lord desire from us?

The Lord does not say, 'Your character is such and such, so you are not fit for My work.' The Lord is One who uses those who are lacking and weak all the more preciously. So it was with Peter, and so with James, and so with the Apostle John—they were all weak people. But the Lord used them greatly.

The Lord wants to use you and me. Concerning the sins of other people also, He says, 'Son, I have remitted your sins; I have removed your sins.' Then the person who receives it by faith has no sin. Brothers and sisters, has the Lord removed all your sins and mine? Then the Lord says to us: 'I am your Master. I have remitted not only your sins but the sins of all people as well. I want you to deliver this to them.'

And then the Lord does not quibble with us over this and that. He does not find fault with what our character is like. He only

wants us to live as the Lord desires, and to receive the guidance of those who have gone before us. When we live as those who go before us desire, the Lord is well pleased.

Receive the guidance of those who go before you and be faithful

The Lord sets those who go before you because, even if He spoke to you directly, you would not understand. If there were no one ahead of you, your life of faith would end right there. Though you wanted to follow the Lord, you could not follow.

The Lord does not set just anyone as His servant. We say 'servant' because he does as he is told, but to speak with more dignity, he is God's ambassador. He is a representative ambassador who speaks in God's stead, so he is by no means one to be despised. He is an ambassador dispatched from the kingdom of heaven. To look down on such a person with human eyes and think that one can deceive him as much as one pleases is truly ignorant and wrong.

You must know that the one who goes before you knows, and yet lets himself be deceived. He is waiting until you turn back. If he went by the principle, he could expose the wrong and cut it off at once. But the Lord is not such a One. He waits again and waits again. What the Lord desires in the end is to live together with His servants.

The Lord told him to go to his house, and the paralytic returned home. Returning home means returning to one's true home and living according to the heart God desires. Did he go back and live again like a cripple? No. He lived uprightly, and wherever he went, he proclaimed what the Lord had done for him.

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He proclaimed that Jesus had raised him up, that because of Jesus his feet had gained strength. He proclaimed: ‘He is God and the Savior, the One who remitted my sins. You too can receive the remission of your sins, and your problems too can be solved if you come before Jesus.’ So he proclaimed all his life long.

You and I must become such people. We must know the heart God desires and live by it. If I do not know it, we must know that the work which those who go before us direct is the very work God desires of you and me, and be faithful in it, putting in our hearts. When we live like that, we become people who live truly worthy of the Lord’s will, united with His heart.

Serve every work knowing that it is God’s work

You and I must live this kind of life, receive blessing, benefit other people, and become those who together enjoy and use all that God possesses. This is possible only by faith. Even after being saved, it is impossible apart from faith. This, too, we must live by faith.

The work you are doing now is the work God desired and entrusted to you. Therefore you are a happy person. Whether it is putting up a greenhouse, broadcasting, doing administration, or handling tax affairs, all those works are God’s work. If you think, ‘Is this really God’s work? Is it not work each one does because he wants to?’—that is because your spiritual eyes have not yet opened. Your spiritual eyes must open.

When your spiritual eyes open, you can earn in one week what you would earn in a whole year, and in one month you can accomplish everything. But if you are spiritually dull, you gain nothing though you strive your whole life. In believing in

salvation, too, when He says, 'I have remitted your sins,' you must receive it, saying, 'Amen, I believe.' The Lord took on all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John, and was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood, receiving the judgment of our sins for us, and so He remitted my sins and yours. It is the same with the work He entrusts to us next. When He says, 'This is My will,' we must believe: 'Amen, it is the life the Lord desires, and the Lord will accomplish it.'

We must believe so. We must keep advancing by faith. Brothers and sisters, do you want to live by faith? If we live by faith, we are happy. If we do not live by faith, it is like a curse. Not knowing why we should live or why we should work, it is so very hard. But if we live by faith, we are truly happy.

When I think that if we bear well this work entrusted to us today, so that it is kept running without trouble for the long years to come until Jesus comes, we will gain countless things through this work, my heart swells. Seen from the outside, putting up a greenhouse looks merely ordinary. But through this work I gain an enormous vessel. People see a greenhouse as just a greenhouse, but I do not. Because I gain many things through it, I do the work with all my heart and all my strength, making plans.

For this is work done for God, for the Church of God, and for souls. It is not my work but God's work. That service is serving God—how rewarding a work it is! And when we have finished that work well, we must do yet another work. We must prepare well so that our family members and our sisters can work in a warm place where the air also circulates well. Because it is God's work, the heart goes out to it. The work you do also draws your heart because it is God's work.

When I go to the place of work, I look at our workers. I know that they are precious ones and honorable ones. If we worked in a factory of the world, who would look on us as precious? But

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here, all are precious ones. Those who farm, those who raise the animals, those who put up the greenhouses, those who do the administration—there is not one who is not precious. All are people doing precious work. It is because they believe in God. Therefore I am preaching now with the desire that you also would do every work as if serving God, believing that it is God's work.

Happy is the person who lives putting his heart into it. Such a person receives blessing, like the paralytic who took up his bed and returned home, like one who lives the life God desires. I pray that God will give you such faith. I close the message. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who remits sins and calls sinners

< Matthew 9:1-17 >

"So He got into a boat, crossed over, and came to His own city. Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you.' And at once some of the scribes said within themselves, 'This Man blasphemes!' But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—then He said to the paralytic, 'Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' And he arose and departed to his house. Now when the multitudes saw it, they marveled and glorified God, who had given such power to men. As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, 'Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard that, He said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but

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sinners, to repentance.' Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'"

In Matthew chapter 9 appear people of many kinds. There is the paralytic lying on a bed, unable to move by himself; there is Matthew the tax collector, treated as a sinner by the people of that day; and there are the many tax collectors and sinners who ate with Jesus. On the other side there are the scribes and the Pharisees, who held fast to their own religious righteousness, and there are also those who thought the form of fasting important. Their outward appearances differed, but all of them had one problem in common: the fact that they had to have their problem of sin solved before God.

Jesus spoke to each person according to his circumstances. To the paralytic He proclaimed the remission of sins; Matthew He called to follow Him; and with sinners He sat in one place and shared food. To those who claimed to be righteous He said to learn the meaning of mercy, and to those who held to an old religious faith He spoke the parable of the new wine and the new wineskins. None of these words stand apart from one another. Jesus came to this earth to save sinners and to give the saved a

new faith and a new life.

To understand the first half of Matthew chapter 9 rightly, we must first know who Jesus is. Jesus is not merely a religious leader who comforts people. Nor does He stop at being one with a special ability to heal diseases. Jesus is God, who Himself remits man's sins, and the Savior who came clothed in flesh to save those who could only die because of sin. Today's passage, therefore, going beyond physical disease, social exclusion, and religious controversy, clearly testifies how Jesus meets sinners and how He gives them complete salvation.

The problem He solved first

People brought a paralytic lying on a bed to Jesus. The paralytic could not rise and walk by his own strength. Without receiving the help of others he could not even come before Jesus. Those who brought him believed that Jesus could surely heal him. When Jesus *"saw their faith,"* He spoke to the paralytic. Yet the first words the Lord spoke were not words about the disease. The Lord said, *"Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."*

To human eyes the palsy looks like the greatest and most urgent problem. Since the body does not move, it seems that the body must be healed first. But the Lord knew what that man needed most. Even if the disease of the body is healed, a person someday grows old, falls sick, and dies again. But if he dies with his problem of sin unsolved, he cannot escape the judgment of God. The Scriptures say, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. So the Lord dealt first with the fundamental problem of the soul before the problem of the flesh.

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These words must not be received as meaning that every disease necessarily arises from some one personal sin. The core of the Lord's teaching is not to condemn the sick. All people are born under sin, and because of sin they live severed from God. Just as the paralytic could not move his own body at will, the sinner cannot escape the power of sin by his own strength. He wants to live virtuously but cannot live wholly so, and though he resolves not to sin, he falls into sin again. He wants to come to God, but because of his sins he cannot come boldly. In this sense the figure of the paralytic shows the helplessness of all people under sin.

The Lord demanded no merit whatever from this helpless man. He did not tell him first to do good deeds, nor to pay back all his past sins with tears. The Lord Himself gave him the word of the remission of sins. The remission of sins is not a result man produces by his own works; it is the grace received by believing what the Savior has accomplished. Just as the paralytic heard the Lord's word while lying on his bed, we too must lay down our own righteousness and hear the word of the salvation the Lord accomplished.

God, who has the authority to remit sins

Hearing Jesus' words, the scribes judged within themselves, *"This Man blasphemes!"* They knew the fact that God alone can remit sins. That judgment in itself was not wrong. The problem lay in the fact that they did not believe that Jesus, who stood before them, was that very God. They saw only Jesus' outward appearance and human background, and did not see that He was the Son of God who had come to save sinners.

Jesus knew their thoughts. That He knew the thoughts within

people's hearts is itself something that reveals that the Lord is no mere man. The Lord asked, *"For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise and walk'?"* For man, both things are impossible. He can neither make a sick body whole with a single word, nor actually remove another person's sins. But for Jesus, who is God, both are possible.

The Lord raised the paralytic to his feet not simply to show an amazing scene. The Lord said, *"that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins."* And He commanded the paralytic to rise, take up his bed, and go home. That he rose at once and returned home is the event that proved the invisible authority of the remission of sins by a visible sign. The power that healed the disease was the marker revealing the fact that Jesus is the Savior who remits sins.

We must not gaze only at Jesus' miracles and miss the salvation those miracles point to. It is a thing to be thankful for when disease is healed, circumstances improve, and what we hope for in the world comes to pass. But the most important purpose for which Jesus came to this earth is to save sinners from sin. Even if one receives blessings of the flesh, if sin remains in his heart as it is, the greatest problem has not been solved. Conversely, the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the remission of all his sins is a person who has obtained eternal life, even if weakness remains in his flesh.

Jesus is God, who created us, and the Savior who Himself took responsibility for our sins. Therefore only the Lord can say, *"your sins are forgiven you."* This declaration is not a groundless comfort. It is the verdict of salvation He can give because He actually took on all sins and received their judgment.

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Grace given to the one who could do nothing

The paralytic could do nothing to remove his sins. He lay on a bed. Even his coming before the Lord was brought about through the help of other people. This very picture testifies clearly of grace. The remission of sins is not a prize obtained by an able person; it is a gift given to the person who admits that he cannot be saved by his own strength and receives the salvation of the Lord.

People try to solve the problem of sin by their own effort. Some think that if they do many good deeds, their past sins will be offset. Some try to be recognized by God by piling up prayer and fasting and service. Still others believe that if they offer their prayers of repentance devoutly every day, the sins committed that day will be erased. But the price of sin is not something man's effort can pay. Even while the sinner strives to wash his sins, he keeps adding sin with his thoughts, words, and deeds. On the path of relying on one's own will and works, the heart can never obtain the assurance of the complete remission of sins.

What the paralytic needed was not a stronger will but the word of the Lord. When the Lord spoke, the remission of sins was proclaimed; when the Lord commanded, he arose. It is the same today. When a sinner looks at the feelings and works of his own heart, he still sees nothing but insufficiency. But when he looks in the word at the work of salvation Jesus accomplished, he comes to know where and how all his sins were dealt with. Faith is not looking at oneself but looking at what the Lord has accomplished.

The faith of those who brought the paralytic is also precious. When one soul cannot come to the Lord by its own strength, people are needed who lead it before the word. The gospel evangelist is not a person who washes away men's sins by his

own ability. He is a person who brings sinners before Jesus and lets them hear exactly the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. When that person hears the word and believes with the heart, the Lord gives the remission of sins. Therefore the church and the workers of the gospel must not condemn the person lying down spiritually, but must patiently lead him before the word of salvation.

The calling that comes first to the sinner

After healing the paralytic, Jesus saw Matthew sitting at the tax office. The tax collector of that day was a person who, leaning on the power of Rome, collected taxes from his own people. Because they often took unjust gain, people regarded tax collectors as greedy and corrupt sinners. They were not respected religiously, and they were despised socially.

To such a Matthew, Jesus first said, *"Follow Me."* It was not that Matthew first made himself clean and then went to find the Lord. The Lord saw him sitting at the tax office and called him. In this calling is contained the Lord's mercy, which is greater than Matthew's past. People defined Matthew with the name tax collector, but the Lord made him a disciple. The occupation, the reputation, and the sins one had before meeting the Lord cannot determine a person's final standing. When one believes the Lord's calling and follows, a new life begins.

Matthew's response is recorded in the short words, *"So he arose and followed Him."* As the paralytic heard the Lord's word and rose, so Matthew heard the Lord's call and rose. The one rose from the bed of his body, and the other rose from the old life in which he had sat in the sinner's seat. Both came to walk a new road by the word of the Lord.

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After calling Matthew, Jesus sat in his house and ate with many tax collectors and sinners. The Lord was with sinners not because He regarded sin lightly. He drew near to save them from sin. The fact that the holy Lord came near to sinners is the gospel. Since the sinner cannot go up to heaven by himself and meet God, God came down to this earth clothed in flesh. The Lord did not avoid sinners; He listened to their words and opened for them the way of salvation.

The true physician the sick soul needs

The Pharisees, seeing Jesus eat with sinners, took issue with His disciples. They thought that they themselves were different from the sinners. On the ground of outward law-keeping and religious life, they regarded themselves as healthy people. But before God, who looks on the heart of man, they too were the same sinners. They simply had not realized their own disease.

Jesus said, *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."* It is entirely natural for a physician to seek the sick. It was just as natural for Jesus, who came to save sinners, to be with sinners. The person who claims he has no disease does not look for a physician. Likewise, the person who thinks himself righteous has no need of the complete salvation of Jesus. To him Jesus remains someone who helps his life a little; He cannot become the Savior who must wash away all his sins.

The sick of whom the Lord spoke does not refer merely to people of bad reputation in the world. It is the person who has realized his own essence before God. It is the person who acknowledges, before the word of the Law, that there is nothing good in him, that he can only sin all his life, and that he cannot

escape the judgment of those sins. Such a person does not put forward his own righteousness. He asks for help: 'Lord, have mercy on me. I cannot live without Your salvation.'

Jesus, the true Physician, does not turn away from such a soul. The Lord does not merely diagnose the sick person and send him back. He not only exposes the cause of sin but also removes that sin completely. He does not demand of man what man cannot do; He makes him believe the cure that the Lord Himself accomplished. Therefore, before the gospel, the most blessed person is the one who does not hide his spiritual disease but admits it.

The heart that seeks mercy

Jesus said, *"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'"* These words mean that God desires the mercy that saves sinners rather than formal religious acts. The Pharisees were zealous in offering sacrifices and keeping regulations, but they did not know the heart of God, who pities sinners. They were more accustomed to separating and condemning sinners than to saving them.

God is not One who demands sacrifice because He lacks something from man. God first gives us life, salvation, and every good thing. Before being saved, the sinner must receive God's mercy rather than put forward his own devotion and sacrifice before God. He must come with empty hands and receive the remission of sins the Lord gives. The thanks and the service offered after receiving grace are not acts that pay the price of salvation; they are the fruits of faith toward the love already received.

To say that He desires mercy does not mean demanding that

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God unconditionally overlook one's sins while one keeps excusing them. It is acknowledging the fact that God's righteous salvation is absolutely necessary. Because one cannot deal with sin by himself, he relies on the salvation the Lord accomplished. To such a person the Lord gives the eternal remission of sins and makes him a child of God.

Moreover, the person who has received mercy also changes in his attitude toward other sinners. Because he knows that he himself was saved without any merit, he does not condemn others rashly. He does not call their sin right, but he desires that those souls also hear the gospel and be saved. The church of the gospel is not a gathering of people who boast their own righteousness; it is the place where those who have received the remission of sins by the Lord's mercy pass that mercy on to yet other sinners.

The complete remission of sins accomplished with the water and the Spirit

On what ground, then, does Jesus give the remission of sins to sinners? Because God is just, He cannot say without any ground that sin does not exist. The price of sin must surely be paid. Jesus could proclaim the remission of sins to the paralytic because He was the Savior who would Himself bear the transfer of sins and the judgment that the man had to receive.

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. This baptism was not a baptism He received because He had sin. It was the righteous work by which the sinless Son of God received all the sins of mankind passed on to Himself. When Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, He said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all*

righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). Because Jesus took on the sins of all the people of the world once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, John the Baptist testified the next day, pointing to Jesus, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).*

Carrying the sin of the world that He had taken on with the baptism received from John the Baptist, Jesus went to the Cross. The blood of the Cross was the judgment of sin. The Lord was nailed there in our place and died shedding His blood, paying the price of sin completely. And He said, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). The Lord rose from the dead in three days, revealing that He is the Son of God and that our salvation has been completed.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The water refers to the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, and the blood refers to the judgment of sin He received on the Cross. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus, who accomplished this work, is God and that this salvation is true. The Scriptures say, *"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 –ASV" (1 John 5:6)*. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are not separate events; they are one gospel that has completely saved sinners.

We receive the remission of sins not by vaguely believing only in the Cross of Jesus, nor by relying on our own fervent feelings. We receive it by believing with the heart the word that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and was judged on the Cross, and rose again. The person who believes this gospel comes to know that the Lord bore not only the sins of his past but all the sins of his present and his future as well. So, on the ground of God's word, he can confess that there is no sin in his heart.

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The words *"your sins are forgiven you"* come to us today as well through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The salvation the Lord accomplished is not incomplete. Nor is it a salvation maintained only while our conduct is good. Because Jesus took on all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid their price in full on the Cross, whoever believes this receives the eternal remission of sins once and for all. The words *"with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12)* testify to this.

The gospel cannot be patched onto an old faith

The disciples of John asked why Jesus' disciples did not fast while they themselves and the Pharisees fasted. Fasting itself is not wrong. The Lord also said that in the days when the bridegroom is taken away, they will fast. The problem lies in making fasting a means of piling up one's own righteousness and obtaining salvation. Though Jesus the Bridegroom had come and was saving sinners, people were still looking at their own asceticism and religious works.

Today, too, many people say they believe in Jesus and yet try to wash their sins with their own works. They think that the original sin was remitted by the blood of Jesus, but the actual sins committed daily must be washed with prayers of repentance. This doctrine binds a person as a sinner for his whole life. If he repented yesterday and sins again today, sin arises in his heart again, and it makes him afraid that some sin he failed to remember or failed to repent of may still remain. In this way the salvation of Jesus becomes not a complete salvation but an incomplete salvation that man must supplement every day.

But the sin Jesus took on with the baptism He received from John the Baptist is not a part; it is *"the sin of the world."* In it are included all the sins we commit from the day we are born until the day we die. The Lord carried that sin and was judged once and for all on the Cross. Therefore the repentance that a born-again person offers when he has done wrong is not an act of passing that sin to Jesus again and receiving atonement anew. It is acknowledging his wrong before the word that has already remitted all sins, and turning his thoughts and his way to follow the will of God. The ground of the remission of sins is not the completeness of our prayers of repentance but the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross.

The Lord said that no one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. The gospel of the water and the Spirit must not be attached as a single patch onto one's existing works-centered faith. The belief that says, 'I believe in Jesus, and I acknowledge the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, but my sins I must wash every day with my own prayers of repentance,' mixes the new gospel with an old doctrine. Then the heart falls into greater confusion. One cannot hold on to God's perfect righteousness and man's imperfect righteousness at the same time.

The new heart that holds the new wine

New wine must be put into new wineskins, and then both are preserved. The new wine refers to the gospel of the new covenant that Jesus completed, the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The new wineskin is the heart that lays down its own righteousness and its old, wrong doctrines and receives the word of God just as it is. To be saved, one must first throw away the

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stubbornness that insists that one's own thought is right. One must acknowledge the fact that the word of God is higher than our experience and our religious common sense.

To have a new heart does not mean losing all one's past memories and worldly knowledge. It means that the standard by which one believes God becomes new. Before, one judged salvation by the standard of his own feelings, zeal, and works; now he judges by the written word. Before, he thought that he became a sinner again every time he sinned; now he believes the fact that Jesus removed all sins forever with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and with the Cross. Before, he thought he could be saved only by serving God; now he is first saved by grace and then serves God with thanksgiving.

The person who has become a new wineskin must keep learning the word so that his faith grows. A person newly born again is like a child newly born spiritually. However long he led a religious life before, from the time he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit he must learn the righteousness of God anew. He needs the training of hearing the word within the church, having fellowship with those who came to believe before him, and laying his own thoughts down before the word. If he keeps holding to his old way of thinking even after receiving the gospel, his faith can hardly grow.

The new faith does not make us dissolute. Rather, it makes us believe the fact that we have been saved completely from sin, and so it gives us the strength to live a life that pleases God. The person weighed down by guilt looks only at his own problem, but the person who has the assurance of the remission of sins can look after other souls. He does good not in order to obtain salvation, but with thanksgiving because he has already been saved. This is the new life that begins under grace.

The joy of salvation enjoyed with the Bridegroom

Jesus likened Himself to a bridegroom. It is fitting for the wedding guests who are with the bridegroom to rejoice. When the Bridegroom, the Lord, has come and taken on all our sins and accomplished salvation, to stay only in sorrow and condemnation with the heart of a sinner is not a life fitting for the gospel. The saved believer may have hardships of the flesh and sufferings for the gospel, but deep in his heart there is the joy of having received the remission of sins and eternal life.

This joy is not a temporary emotion that arises because one's circumstances are good. It is the joy that comes from the faith that the sin which had made us enemies of God is gone, that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart, and that we have become God's children. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not rejoice because he himself is perfect. Though he is still lacking, he rejoices because the Lord has accomplished the perfect salvation.

Of course, the believer must grieve over his own wrongs and turn from them, and at times he may fast and pray for the gospel. But all those acts are not the price for obtaining the remission of sins. They are acts of faith by which the person already saved seeks the will of God, restrains the desires of the flesh, and serves the work of the gospel. The fasting of the sinner who has lost the Bridegroom of salvation and the fasting of the righteous who seeks the work of God within the Bridegroom's grace differ at their starting points.

The new road walked by those who have received grace

The words of Matthew 9:1–17 flow on as one stream. The

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paralytic received the remission of sins and walked away carrying his bed. Matthew heard the Lord's call, rose from the tax office, and followed the Lord. Tax collectors and sinners sat in one place with the Lord. Those who held to their own righteousness heard the word to learn the meaning of mercy, and those who held to an old faith heard the word to put new wine into new wineskins. The Lord does not stop at remitting the sinner's sins; He makes him walk a new road with a new faith.

We, too, were originally like spiritual paralytics. Though we tried not to sin, we sinned; though we tried to wash our sins, we could not wash them. Though we wanted to serve God rightly, we could not come to Him boldly because of sin. But Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and rose again. When we believed this gospel, the Lord gave us the remission of sins and new life.

Now we are no longer people lying on a bed and struggling to obtain the remission of sins. We are people who believe the Lord's word, rise, and walk. We must stand not in the place of the Pharisee who boasts his own righteousness, but in the place of the sinner who has received mercy and preaches the gospel to other souls. We must not patch the gospel of the water and the Spirit onto old religious notions, but live with the new heart that fully believes only the righteousness of God.

The Lord still speaks today. He Himself has remitted all our sins, He came to call sinners, and He has become the true Physician of the sick soul. The person who believes this word with the heart receives the remission of sins and becomes righteous before God. And within the Lord's church he learns the word, rises by faith carrying his own bed, and walks the road of bringing other souls to life. We give thanks to the Lord who has accomplished all these things. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

New wine into new wineskins

< Matthew 9:14-17 >

"Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'"

The word of verse 17 in today's passage is a word we must surely know. This word shows us that only when we live this way are we leading the life of faith rightly. Let us all read verse 17 together in one voice. "*Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'"*

New wine must be put into new wineskins

The passage speaks of new wine and leather wineskins. New

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wine must be put into new wineskins. Today we hold water or wine in bottles or jars. But in the old days people slaughtered a sheep, skinned it, dressed the hide well, and made a wineskin of the leather. They would keep wine in that leather skin and drink from it.

So we must look at this word bearing those circumstances in mind. New wine is not put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst, the wine is spilled, and the skins are ruined as well. Both end up being thrown away. If one has farmed anew and obtained new wine, the new wine must be put into a new wineskin. For the wine to ripen well and be preserved long and long, the skin also must be new. This is a matter of common sense.

The life of faith is the same. If we have heard and believed the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus received baptism from John and took on all the sins of the world passed on to Him, that He died on the Cross shedding His blood and so received in full the judgment of our sins for us, and that He rose from the dead and so accomplished our salvation completely—and have received the remission of sins, then that grace must be held in a new wineskin. The person who has received the remission of sins must be held in a new wineskin.

The old wineskin is the old desires; the new wineskin is a life for others

Then what do the old wineskin and the new wineskin mean for the saved person? The old wineskin is the desires we held in the old days and the habits of the old days. What did we live for before we were born again? We lived for ourselves. We lived to fulfill our own desires. How to succeed, how to become rich, how to gain honor and power and flaunt them before others—

this was the purpose of life.

But after we are born again, the Lord calls that the old wineskin. He says it must be put into a new wineskin. Then what is the new wineskin for the born-again person? It is seeking the benefit of others. That God loves us and saves us, and makes us love one another, is the principle of the Cross. Therefore the saved person must stop the work of fulfilling his own desires and live for other people. He must lead his life of faith seeking the salvation of other people's souls and the happiness of others. The passage is telling us exactly this.

The saved must be held in the new wineskin

The saved person must be held in the new wineskin. If we have believed the gospel of the remission of sins—that Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world passed on to Him, and received in full the judgment of that sin by being nailed to the Cross and shedding His blood—then the Holy Spirit is in our hearts. When the Holy Spirit is present, as the word says, *"old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*, we have become the new wine. Since we have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received salvation, we must now be put into the new wineskin.

We must throw away the desires and the power and the honor we pursued in the old days. Just as God loved us and saved us, we too must now labor and think for those who have not yet been saved, and put our bodies into that work and live for that purpose. This is what the new wineskin speaks of.

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Unless the purpose changes, the life of faith does not work

The new wineskin is truly important. Yet there are people who live without being conscious of this, without knowing what this word means. Living that way, there are people who fall into anguish, wondering why their life of faith does not go well, and who strive but do not get on. What is the reason? Since we have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and been saved, received the love of God, and obtained eternal life, from now on we must put ourselves into the work of having all people receive salvation. To live so is what is right. God tells us so.

If we live like that, God supplies everything—our life, our heart, our thoughts, and our body. And so we also come to live well. And we become able to walk with God. But because this concept is not firmly established, people try to live for their own desires and their own gain even after receiving salvation, and so the life of faith does not work.

There are those who say: I have certainly believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received salvation, yet something is different between me and the other saved people, and I do not know what it is. Such people must realize what today's word is saying. The saved person lives for others.

The saved live for others

It is asking how to bring many people to salvation, and how to help the brothers and sisters do well and not be hurt. This is the very purpose for which our Lord came to this earth. The Lord came from heaven to this earth and clothed Himself in human flesh. And He received baptism from John and took on all the

sins of the world, was judged for those sins on the Cross and died shedding His blood, and rose from the dead in three days. With this gospel of the water and the Spirit He saved us, gave us eternal life, and gave us new life.

Therefore we too, after receiving salvation, must live according to the will of God. We must live for the purpose of having other people saved, having the brothers and sisters do well, and benefiting them. Then neither the wineskin is thrown away nor the wine.

Who are those who end up as salt that has lost its flavor?

But when a saved person puts himself into the desires he used to hold in the old wineskin—the desires of his own gain—the skin bursts completely and he himself is completely thrown away. Though saved, he degenerates into a useless person. He degenerates into an unneeded person, a person of one talent, a person who troubles and wearies others, a person who does not live well himself and makes things hard for others. This is a truly important matter.

You must look at the spirit and the faith in which the believers who have gone before you live. If you look at what they do, it may seem little different from what you do. But if you look at the spirit in which they live and the purpose they hold, you can see that it is plainly different. The righteous rejoice when souls receive salvation and the will of God is accomplished. They rejoice when God's people eat well, live well, and are healthy.

But the person who, though saved, still follows only the lusts of the flesh is different. Such a person has little interest in what

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makes the members glad. He thinks only of whether something benefits himself. He reckons only whether he gained profit from this affair, whether he gained more than that other person. Such a person is a person in a sorry state. He does not know this word the Lord is speaking here. Though saved, he does not know this truth. Such a person ends up a useless person, salt that has lost its flavor.

The person saved by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit lives for the Lord. He lives for souls. He lives for the brothers and sisters. Then God loves, blesses, and protects such people, and to make them bear more fruit He blesses them still more so that they get on still better. This is the will of God. This is exactly what the Lord meant when He said, *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33)*. Brothers and sisters, do you understand?

We must examine what goal we are living for

Even if any of you are tired and drowsiness comes, please listen to this word for a moment. Are you and I now living for God, for the will of God? Are we living toward the new purpose now? We must think deeply about whether we are living for the purpose that comes after salvation, not the purpose we had before receiving salvation.

Brothers and sisters, examine what purpose you are living for now. Are you living to accomplish the will of God, or to accomplish your own purpose? Within this church, are you living to achieve your own purpose, or are you living for the purpose of God? The person who is not living rightly must change his purpose.

Only when the goal is exact do we bear beautiful fruit

If your purpose goes wrong, everything goes wrong. For a person always runs toward his goal. If you fix a wrong goal, you run ceaselessly toward that wrong goal. But everything you run after becomes a curse. It is not that God deliberately refuses to bless; it is that you do what cannot receive blessing, and so it does not become a blessing.

After we meet the Lord, the work of living for ourselves is finished. Therefore we must fix the goal of doing what God desires. Then what is it that God desires for us? It is that we prosper. He desires, *"that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2)*. God wants us to prosper in both spirit and body. It is living for the purpose of having the unsaved receive salvation, and of the saved loving one another, understanding one another, embracing one another, and benefiting one another.

When I look on, there is something truly regrettable. There are cases where I think: that brother, that sister has certainly received salvation, but why does he live so dully? He is not a dull person by nature—why is he like that? I waited long and thought it over. As a result, I came to know that it is because, even after receiving salvation, he does not run toward the new goal God desires.

Those who leave the church do so because their goal is different

What have you and I done within the church until now? We have done what God desires, the work of devotion to the gospel

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of the water and the Spirit. For what do we do this work? It is to serve the work of saving other souls. If we have done that work until now without knowing its meaning well, from now on we must do it knowing. We must do it knowing that by doing this work now, I am serving the work of saving other souls. When we go forward with that heart, the work we do is joyful. Even when it is hard, it is joyful and rewarding, and our self-respect lives.

But if not, everything we do is vexing. Resentment and complaint rise up: 'What comes back to me from doing this work? Nothing comes back—why must I be so faithful? Why do they make only me do this work?' But when we do the work God desires, it is different. When we think that we are doing it now for God and for the salvation of souls, an attachment arises: how shall I accomplish this work well? We come to consider that because this is not my own work, I must bear it truly faithfully, bear it well even when I do not feel like it, and bear it well even when it does not suit my disposition. We become such people.

Such a person is the person united with God's heart. If we possibly can, we must become people whose hearts are united with God. We must become people united with Him in heart, not people united in flesh. However much you adorn and care for the flesh, what use is it? If the heart is not united with God, it is an empty shell and an old wineskin. Seeking only to fill one's own flesh with good things, it is nothing at all. There is no reward, people do not recognize it, and God does not recognize it—what good is there in it?

The Apostle Paul said, *"join in following my example" (Philippians 3:17)*. He told them to imitate him because he lived for the Lord and lived for the salvation of souls. He lived the life of the purpose God gave, the life of the new wineskin, and then departed. We must be so as well. We must put ourselves into the

goal of life that God desires. God's goal must become our goal.

But if God's goal does not become our goal, and our own goal becomes our goal, we are set at odds with God. We live differently from Him. There are people who, in their praise, say they live for the Lord, and yet in reality live only for themselves. If one lives with the purpose of saying, 'Now that I have received the remission of sins and salvation, from now on I will fill the desires of the flesh I never got to enjoy; I will pile up much and enjoy it for once,' would God be pleased? The Holy Spirit is not pleased.

Make God's goal your goal

Therefore you and I must have a clear goal. A person who runs a race must have a clear goal. If the goal is not clear, however much he runs, what is the use? If he does not reach the goal but arrives at some absurd place and says he has arrived, that place is not the goal, is it? The goal must be exact. You and I must have an exact goal.

When the goal is right, God takes account of even the small work we do. And that work becomes rewarding and comes to bear beautiful fruit. We must lead the life of faith knowing this. Until now, countless people have been in the church and then left. Was it because they had all failed to receive salvation? They received salvation. Many received it. Then why did they leave? Because in the old wineskin they kept the old purpose—their own purpose—even after being saved, and ran toward that goal.

That is why they go wrong. And so they become servants of the devil and adversaries. If you are within the church, can you not live well? Can you not do rewarding work? Can you not live a beautiful and noble life? It is the exact opposite. Everything is

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possible. Within the church you can live well, and you can live a noble life, a beautiful life, an abundant life, and a rewarding life. But if you leave the church, there is no rewarding life, no abundant life, and no precious life. Only a rotting life and a shameful life remain. Therefore we must make God's goal our goal and live by it.

Therefore we must live so yesterday, today, and in the days ahead. Our goal has already been fixed. Those who say, 'I have been saved, so now my life is my own,' and fix their own goals, cannot be united with the church. They resent the church and leave. But in fact, what is there to resent in the church? It is because their goal is different that they do so. To resent the church is to resent God. Such a person, in the end, must lay down even his own salvation.

It is like the man who received one talent and buried it in the ground, and then said to God, 'Are You not a miser? You gave me one salvation and demand my whole life—are You not rather an evil one?' Is God really such a One? The person who speaks like that must lay down even his own salvation, and must enter together into the unquenchable fire, the place where the devil enters. That is why the Lord judges so.

As you and I know well, when we hold the new purpose God desires, a beautiful goal, life becomes beautiful. It becomes joyful, rewarding, and noble. But when one holds a filthy goal, the person becomes filthy, ugly, and wretched. If having a house, or having a building, becomes the goal, that is the end of it. Brothers and sisters, is that house so great a thing? If it is good to use, that is enough; even if that house is worth ten billion, could it become the whole of my life?

Serve gladly with a willing heart

I do not know why people are so foolish. With their own desires they fail to treasure the precious members, and try to oppress them, press them down, and take from them. How shameful a thing that is! The saved person defiles the saved with his own desires. Long ago a child was nearly beaten by his schoolmates. That child said: 'Did your mothers teach you to beat people? My mother did not teach me so.' Then the children all felt ashamed and drew back. Truly right words.

Did Jesus Christ, who saved you with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, teach you that way? He did not teach you to live only for yourselves, only for the flesh. Rather He taught you to love your neighbor as yourself. He taught that those souls also must receive salvation, so preach the gospel to them and serve them. Are we living so? There are those who live so. But there are also those who live the exact opposite life. And yet they think themselves wise and right—while holding a filthy goal. We must take the goal the Lord has fixed as our goal.

Therefore, new wine must be put into new wineskins, and then both are preserved. The person saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit must live holding God's purpose; then both are preserved and receive blessing. Brothers and sisters, do you agree? Do you believe? That is the truly genuine life of faith. The life of faith does not lie in knowing the Bible much or knowing it little. To make God's goal our goal is the first start of the life of faith, and also its last.

Yet I think it may also be that people do not know because it was not taught—because the preacher did not teach it. That is why I preach like this. What is truly puzzling is that it is not as though this sermon has never been preached, nor as though no sermon has been preached on this passage, and yet there are

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many who act as if they had never once heard it.

God's goal is my goal. So, though lacking, I do what I can do within the twenty-four hours of a day. I am not telling you to do what you cannot do. You also are doing what God desires. But you must do it desiring it from the heart. You must do it because you yourself want to, willingly. When you do it not like a slave dragged along by force, but gladly and joyfully and of your own accord, the Lord is pleased. I believe that you will become such people. For I, too, became so after meeting the Lord. In the old days I lived for myself, but after meeting the Lord I stopped the work of living for myself.

Live not for money but for the gospel

That I do not live for myself means that when offerings come in, I intend to use them all for the Lord. My goal is how to use that money for the gospel. Ordinary people think about how much money has come in and how much of it they might take for themselves. That is the person holding the old purpose of the old wineskin. But for the person holding the new purpose of the new wineskin, the goal is how to use this effectively for the spreading of the gospel. Therefore whether the money is much or little makes no difference at all. For doing the work of God, however much money there is, it is never enough. I do not pocket that money for myself. All that is God's is God's—why should I become a slave of money?

I want you also to become such people. God's goal—preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit and serving the gospel—is our purpose. When we live for that purpose, your heart becomes glad. Just as He desires *"that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John*

1:2), the heart becomes glad, and as the Holy Spirit rejoices, you also rejoice. Next, all things go well. When we meet a hard problem and pray for help, we taste the hand that actually helps us, and so all things go well. And when all things go well, the heart also becomes strong. Thus we receive all the blessings—of the soul, of all things, and of health. In the world there are those whose goal is to become rich, but we are completely different.

Our goal is to eat well and live well because of God and to serve the gospel much as well. Merely becoming rich is not what we desire. We want to spend much money for God; we do not want merely to rake money together. Brothers and sisters, you must know why the Lord speaks like this. Let us read verses 16 and 17 once more and close the message. *"No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'"* Amen. He said that new wine must be put into new wineskins, and then both are preserved.

Those who live the life of the righteous are the true stars.

If we do the opposite of this or go against it, both are thrown away. Do not boast too confidently that you are saved. You can be put out. Countless people have been put out through loving money. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). When one is put out after being born again, his heart becomes filthier and more evil, and he becomes an

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adversary. He even ends up standing at the front in harming those who believe in Jesus. Brothers and sisters, that is a curse. I pray that you will not become so.

Rather, believe in God, remember the love of God, and live holding the goal God desires, so that both your spirit and your body prosper. I pray that you will become people who receive praise from God in every work, who benefit countless people and lead them to receive salvation, and who help others also to live well. I pray that you will become people so faithful and so blessed as to be commemorated long and long, even in the kingdom of heaven.

It is said that *"those who turn many to righteousness"* will shine *"Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3)*. Such a person is a star among stars. The true stars are the righteous. Those who live the life of the righteous are the true stars. The person who lives only for himself is not a star. He is only a vain thing that stays for a moment and is scattered. Brothers and sisters, I pray that you will become such stars, unchanging forever. I believe that God has given such blessings within our church, to you, to all of us, and upon the churches across the whole nation. I give thanks. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who gives life according to faith and seeks workers

< Matthew 9:18-38 >

"While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live.' So Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And suddenly, a woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years came from behind and touched the hem of His garment. For she said to herself, 'If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well.' But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, 'Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well.' And the woman was made well from that hour. When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him. But when the crowd was put outside, He went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. And the report of this went out into all that land. When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, 'Son of David, have mercy on us!' And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their

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eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, 'See that no one knows it.' But when they had departed, they spread the news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' But the Pharisees said, 'He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.' Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'"

In the latter half of Matthew chapter 9, problems that human strength cannot solve appear one after another. A ruler's daughter had died, and a woman had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years. Two blind men could not see, and a man made mute by a demon could not speak. At the end there appear great multitudes, struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd. The shapes of their problems differed, but all of them needed a Savior greater than themselves.

Jesus did not turn away from their circumstances. He followed the man who asked for help, turned to look at the woman who touched the hem of His garment in faith, and took the dead girl by the hand and raised her up. He touched the eyes of the blind men and opened them, and cast the demon out of the man made mute by a demon, so that he spoke. And seeing the

great multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them. The power and the mercy of Jesus did not stay with one or two people but went out toward all the cities and villages.

All these events clearly testify that Jesus is not merely One who solves the problems of the flesh, but the Savior of mankind under sin and death. The miracles of healing the sick and raising the dead reveal the fact that Jesus has the authority of life. At the same time they clearly reveal the work of salvation that brings to life the soul dead in sin, opens the eyes that cannot see the truth, and opens the mouth that could not speak the righteousness of God, making it a witness of the gospel.

Therefore, when we read this word, we must not seek only the visible miracles. The Lord did not promise every believer a life on this earth always without sickness and without hardship. The apostles also passed through weakness of the flesh and tribulations. The greatest hope this passage gives us is the fact that Jesus overcomes the power of sin and death and gives eternal life to those who believe. That Lord still today saves the person who believes the word, and raises up the saved as workers of the harvest.

The plea that began in the place of despair

A ruler came to Jesus, worshiped Him, and said, *"My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live."* His daughter was not merely in critical condition; she had already died. Humanly, every possibility had come to an end. But he believed the power of Jesus, greater than death. He did not draw back, saying that since his daughter had died, it was now of no use. He believed and pleaded that if the Lord came and laid His hand on her, she would live.

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Faith is not the optimism that thinks the problem small. It is acknowledging death as death, and yet believing that the Lord can raise even the dead. It is believing not in one's own ability or the possibilities of one's circumstances, but in who Jesus is. This ruler did not put forward his position or his merits. He bowed before the Lord and asked for help. His desperate circumstances rather humbled him before the Lord.

Jesus heard his plea, arose, and followed him. The Lord did not watch from a distance the pain of the one asking for help. He walked together with him toward his house. In this scene we see the Lord's heart toward sinners. Man, dead spiritually because of sin, cannot come to God, but the Lord came to us first. He laid aside the glory of heaven, clothed Himself in flesh, and Himself walked the road of salvation to solve our sin and death.

For us to ask the Lord for help is not to make the excuse that we bear no responsibility. It is to admit that we cannot overcome sin and death by our own strength and to rely on the word of the Savior. God does not turn away the person who knows his own helplessness and asks for help. Rather, it is the heart that thinks itself strong and righteous and able to live without the Lord that blocks salvation.

The faith that receives the word as fact

While Jesus was going to the ruler's house, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind Him. She had suffered long from the disease. Reading the records of the other Gospels together, she had suffered many things from many physicians and had spent all she had, yet the disease had only grown worse. She carried a problem that remained unsolved even after she had used every human method.

That woman believed in her heart, *"If only I may touch His garment, I shall be made well."* She pressed through the many people and touched the hem of Jesus' garment. There was no magical power in the act itself. What mattered was the heart that believed in Jesus. Because she believed the fact that Jesus was the Savior who could heal her, that faith appeared in action.

Jesus turned around, saw her, and said, *"Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well."* The Lord knew the woman's faith, and He did not leave her hidden in shame and fear. Calling her *"daughter,"* He received her into the love of God. To one who had long been treated as an unclean invalid, the Lord gave a new relationship and peace. The woman was saved from that hour.

Faith is not using the Lord's power as a means of fulfilling one's own desires. Nor does it mean that whatever one strongly imagines in the heart becomes reality. Scriptural faith is truly receiving what God has spoken and accomplished. It is the same with the remission of sins. We are not saved by suggesting to ourselves that we have no sin. Because Jesus actually took on our sins and was judged for them, we believe that fact just as the written word says, and so receive the remission of sins.

People try to find the evidence of salvation in their own feelings. They examine whether many tears came when they prayed, whether the heart was fervent, whether they had some special experience. But feelings change from day to day. Today one overflows with assurance, and tomorrow, when one fails, one is discouraged. The word of God does not change. Faith is not holding on to one's own changing state, but holding on to the unchanging salvation of the Lord.

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The salvation that stopped the unending flow of sin

The flow of blood is a disease in which blood keeps flowing and life ebbs away. Through the picture of this disease we can think about the problem of sin. From man's heart, evil thoughts and words and deeds flow out without ceasing. The root of sin does not disappear because one makes a resolution once or weeps and prays once. A person tries to wash the sins he has committed, but even while he is washing them, he commits other sins. Because of this, in the faith that relies on one's own works, sin never comes to an end.

The Law reveals that we are sinners, but it does not remove sin. Man's effort and religious asceticism also cannot wash the sin of the heart forever. Just as the woman with the flow of blood was not healed by her own strength through the long years, the sinner cannot cut off the flow of sin with his own righteousness. The true cure must come from Jesus.

To save sinners, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was the work of salvation by which He received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body. The Lord carried those sins, was nailed to the Cross, and received all the judgment by dying shedding His blood. And in three days He rose again. With the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, the transfer of sin, the judgment, and the work of new life were all accomplished.

The Scriptures say, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21)*. Because the sinless Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He could receive the judgment of sin on the Cross in our place. God

judged all our sins in Jesus, and He has made us, who believe this, become the righteousness of God.

When we believe this gospel, the condemnation of sin ends in the heart. This does not mean that we have become a perfect flesh that never again does wrong. The flesh is still weak and makes mistakes. But because Jesus took on all the sins of our whole life with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and paid their price completely on the Cross, in the believer's heart there remains no sin to be judged. When the believer realizes a wrong, he acknowledges it and turns from it, but he does not try to produce the remission of sins all over again. He returns to the Lord's righteousness, already completed, and stands on faith.

Just as the woman with the flow of blood was saved at the very hour she met Jesus, the sinner also receives the remission of sins the moment he realizes and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Salvation is not a reward given at the end of a long religious life. It is the grace given when one believes with the heart what the Lord has accomplished. However long a person has suffered under guilt, if he rightly believes in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross, the sin of his heart is washed white.

The Lord of life, who calls death a sleep

When Jesus arrived at the ruler's house, the people were already preparing the funeral and raising a commotion. To them the girl's death was an irreversible reality. When Jesus said, "*the girl is not dead, but sleeping,*" they ridiculed Him. By human common sense they could not believe that a dead person could rise again.

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That the Lord called death a sleep does not mean that the girl had not actually died. It means that before the Lord of life, death is not an eternal end but like a sleep that can be awakened. To man, death closes every possibility, but Jesus is greater than the power of death. After sending the crowd out, the Lord took the girl by the hand, and the girl arose.

This event shows that Jesus is the Savior who can solve even death, the last enemy of man. The wages of sin is death. All people must die and be judged because of sin. But Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The Lord's resurrection is the proof that the price of sin has been paid completely and the power of death has been broken.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit comes to life from the state of spiritual death. The soul that had been severed from God receives the remission of sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. And even after the death of the body he lives forever. For Jesus will raise the believers again on the last day. Therefore, to the believer, the death of the body is not eternal destruction but a sleep that awaits the resurrection.

In the face of death, the people of the world despair, but the believer has the hope of the resurrection. This hope is not an insensibility that takes death lightly. We grieve when we part from those we love, but we believe that the Lord of life will raise them again. Our salvation does not stop at comfort for the heart; it is the complete salvation that reaches to the resurrection of the body and the eternal kingdom of God.

The two men who followed, asking for mercy

When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out, *"Son of David, have mercy on us!"* They could not see Jesus with their eyes, but they had heard the news about Jesus. Calling Jesus the *"Son of David"* was a confession of faith that He is the Messiah and the King promised by God. The eyes of their flesh were closed, but their hearts were opening toward who Jesus is.

They did not cry out once and give up. Even after Jesus entered the house, they followed Him in. They knew their problem exactly, and they also knew who could solve that problem. So they asked for mercy: *"Have mercy on us!"* What the person who comes before the Lord needs is not the boasting of his own qualifications but this kind of heart.

Jesus asked, *"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"* The Lord did not ask how long they had suffered or how virtuously they had lived. He asked whether they believed that the Lord Himself was able to do it. When they answered, *"Yes, Lord,"* the Lord touched their eyes and said, *"According to your faith let it be to you,"* and their eyes were opened.

The faith that receives salvation is like this as well. It is not the faith that asks, 'Can I wash my sins sufficiently?' but the faith that asks, 'Has Jesus been able to remove all my sins?' and answers the word, *"Yes."* Before the word that Jesus took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged for it all on the Cross, we must lay down our own thoughts. If the Lord has accomplished it all, our sins have really disappeared.

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The gospel that brightens the spiritual eyes

A person may see many things of the world with the eyes of the flesh and yet fail to see the righteousness of God. He knows the fact that Jesus shed His blood on the Cross, but he does not know why He had to hang on the Cross. If one does not know the fact that Jesus took over the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, he cannot clearly understand the relation between the death of the Cross and his own sins. So, though he has believed in Jesus for a long time, he confesses that sin remains in his heart.

For the spiritual eyes to be brightened is to come to see God's plan of salvation in the Scriptures. One sees how, in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the sinner laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed his sins onto it, and the offering died shedding its blood in his place. And one sees how, in the New Testament, John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, and Jesus, having taken on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, went to the Cross as the Lamb of God. The fact that the water and the blood accomplished one complete salvation becomes clear within the word.

These eyes are not opened by human wisdom alone. One must humbly hear the word of God and receive the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But this does not mean waiting for some mystical revelation. The Holy Spirit testifies of the righteousness Jesus accomplished through the written word. When we receive the word just as it is, the eyes of the heart are brightened, and we come to see the fact that our sins have already passed to Jesus and that the judgment, too, is finished.

After their eyes were opened, the two men spread the news about Jesus through all that land. Their not obeying the word

with which the Lord sternly warned them must be considered separately, but it was natural that men whose eyes had been opened could not help speaking of the Jesus who had healed them. It is the same with the person whose spiritual eyes have been opened. Before, he spoke of Jesus only religiously; now he can clearly speak of how Jesus removed his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross.

He opens the closed mouth to speak the gospel

As the two men were going out, people brought to Jesus a mute man who was demon-possessed. He could not speak of his own condition by himself. But people brought him to the Lord, and when the Lord cast out the demon, the mute spoke. The multitudes marveled, saying that it was never seen like this in Israel.

This event is the actual work in which the Lord healed a man who was demon-possessed and could not speak. At the same time, from the viewpoint of the gospel, it makes us look back on our own spiritual state. If a person does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he cannot speak the righteousness of Jesus exactly. If he says he believes in Jesus and yet cannot explain how his sins have disappeared, and only repeats that he must wash his sins daily with prayers of repentance, he is failing to testify of the complete salvation.

It is not because we have a gift of speech that we become witnesses of the gospel. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart that has received the remission of sins and makes us testify with our mouths of the truth we have believed. The person who believes the facts that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received all the judgment with

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the blood of the Cross, and rose again and gave us new life, can speak this salvation to anyone he meets.

Acts 1:8 says, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'"* The Holy Spirit is not One who comes upon the religious zeal of a person whose heart still holds its sin as it is; He dwells in the heart of the person who has believed in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins. That Holy Spirit makes us testify of the salvation of Jesus.

That a person who could not speak the gospel comes to preach the gospel is the power of the Lord. Before, though he read the Scriptures, he could not know the core of salvation, and he spoke to others only of his own experiences and works. But after meeting the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he comes to speak of what Jesus has done. The center of his testimony moves from himself to Jesus. This is the grace of the Lord, who opens the closed mouth.

The hearts that differed though they saw the same work

When the mute spoke, the multitudes marveled and acknowledged the amazing thing God had done. But the Pharisees said, *"He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons."* They saw the same event, but their responses were exact opposites. The one side saw the power of Jesus and marveled; the other side twisted the evident work of God into something evil.

Seeing many signs does not automatically produce faith. If the heart holds fast to its own righteousness and prejudice, one

can hear the clearest word and still refuse it. The Pharisees opposed the Lord because Jesus did not recognize their religious authority and their doctrines. They could not accept the fact that they themselves might be wrong.

Today also, when people hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit, two responses appear. The person who knows that he cannot solve his own sins receives with joy the word that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross. But the person who will not give up the righteousness of his long religious life and of his prayers of repentance regards the gospel as a strange or dangerous teaching. The problem lies not in the clarity of the word, but in the heart that will not lay down its own righteousness.

We must have a poor heart before the word of God. We must not stand in the seat of judging the word on the ground that we have believed long and know much. We must first hear what the Scriptures say, and if my thought differs from the word, I must throw my thought away. The eye that sees the Lord's work rightly begins from a humble heart.

The Lord who taught, preached, and healed

Jesus went about all the cities and villages. He did not wait in one particular place for people to come. The Lord went to the places where the people were. He taught in their synagogues, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and healed every disease and every infirmity. In these three ministries appears the Lord's complete care for souls.

Teaching makes a person know the word of God rightly. Wrong faith comes out of wrong knowledge. We must learn according to the Scriptures who Jesus is, why man is a sinner,

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and how God removed sin. With fragmentary emotions and experiences alone, faith cannot stand firm. We must learn the word of God step by step, and know how the whole course of salvation is testified in the Scriptures.

The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom is not merely an exhortation to live morally and virtuously. It is the good news that tells sinners how they can enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said, *"unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. The person who believes in the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross, receives the remission of all sins, and is born again of the Spirit becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God.

The healing of disease and infirmity reveals the Lord's mercy and power. The Lord is not One who speaks only of man's soul and is indifferent to the sufferings of the flesh. He knows our tears and our circumstances and cares for our needs. Yet the Lord's answer is not always given only in the way we think. Sometimes He heals the disease and changes the circumstances, and sometimes, even in weakness, He gives the grace to endure by faith. Most fundamentally, He saves us from sin and death and gives us eternal life.

The church also must follow this ministry of the Lord. It must teach the word exactly, preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit widely, and actually care for suffering souls. It must not speak only the truth of the gospel while turning away from people's pain, nor give only social help without preaching the gospel of the remission of sins. As the Lord did, truth and mercy must appear together.

The heart that saw the sheep without a shepherd

Jesus saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion for them, because they were struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd. In the words *"moved with compassion"* is contained a deep mercy beyond simple pity. The Lord did not look only at their outward appearance. He saw the condition of souls that did not know where to go under sin, were harassed by false teachings, and could not hear the true word of salvation.

When sheep have no shepherd, they cannot find good pasture and water, and they cannot avoid danger. Today, too, many people struggle and wander spiritually while leading religious lives. They are zealous in worship and prayer and service, but the sin of their hearts does not disappear. They are taught by their leaders that one is still a sinner even though he believes in Jesus, and that sins are washed only if one offers prayers of repentance daily. But however much they repent, they become sinners again the next day, and so they cannot obtain true rest.

The true shepherd is not a person who binds the sheep to himself, but a person who feeds them the salvation Jesus accomplished. He must preach the gospel that Jesus took on all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and accomplished the eternal atonement on the Cross. He must have the sheep eat this word, receive the remission of sins, and be reconciled with God. The person who uses the sheep for his own honor and gain is not a shepherd but a hireling.

The person who has received the Lord's mercy also changes in the eyes with which he looks at wandering souls. He does not sneer at them as ignorant, nor hate them because they belong to another denomination. He remembers the fact that we, too, struggled and wandered in just the same way before we knew the gospel. So he preaches the truth clearly, and yet endures long

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and serves with the desire that they be saved. The work of the gospel is not winning an argument; it is delivering one soul from sin and death.

What the workers of the harvest need

Jesus said, *"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few."* The souls who must hear the gospel are many, but the workers who preach the true gospel to them are few. Though religious leaders and preachers are many, those who preach exactly the remission of sins completed by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross are not many. If a person who does not know the gospel works zealously, he can make people religious like himself, but he cannot deliver the truth that washes the sin of the heart.

To become a worker of the harvest, one must first believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins oneself. One cannot feed others with food one has not eaten, and one cannot guide others along a road one does not know. The person who believes the facts that Jesus took on all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and ended the judgment on the Cross, and so has no sin in his heart, can become a witness of the gospel.

Second, one must have a heart that pities souls. What is needed before eloquence and much knowledge is the heart that one soul must surely receive the remission of sins. We must carry the very heart with which the Lord saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion. The person who loves souls explains the word until they understand, leads them to the church, and cares for them so that their faith grows even after they are saved.

Third, one must love the gospel and work together with the church. The harvest is not accomplished by the ability of one person. One preaches the gospel, another teaches the word, another prays, another serves with material things, and another cares for the souls newly come. The Holy Spirit raises up each member within the church and makes them work together. We must serve the gospel united with the church, the body of the Lord, not with an independent zeal that seeks to lift up one's own name.

Fourth, one must keep learning and being trained. Receiving the remission of sins does not mean that one immediately knows all the word well and guides every soul wisely. One must learn the word from the servants and the believers who have gone before, learn how to look into people's hearts, and receive the training of denying one's own thoughts. Having shortcomings does not mean one cannot become a worker. The person who relies on the Lord and is willing to learn grows step by step into a useful worker.

The prayer for workers to be sent out

Jesus told His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers for His harvest. The worker of the gospel is not a professional whom man produces out of his own ambition. He is a person whom God, the Lord of the harvest, calls and sends. Therefore the church must pray that God will raise up in faith those believers who have received the remission of sins and send them out to every nation and every region.

But this prayer does not end with the words, 'Please send someone else.' The disciples who heard this word were themselves sent out in the very next chapter. The person who

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prays for workers to be sent must also have the heart to obey when the Lord sends him. Even if I cannot go in person to a distant place, I can preach the gospel to one soul near me, help the workers who are sent out with prayer and material things, and faithfully bear the work entrusted to me in the church.

The harvest has its season. If the grain is ripe and there are no workers, it spoils in the field. We cannot guarantee tomorrow's opportunity to the soul that is ready to hear the gospel today. The world changes fast, and man's life is short. That is why the Lord says that the harvest is plentiful, and looks for workers. We must not keep putting it off, looking only at our own circumstances, but begin in faith in the place the Lord has opened for us.

The work of the gospel is not completed by our ability. It is man who plants the seed and waters it, but it is God who makes it grow. What we must do is preach exactly the gospel Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, and pray that the Holy Spirit will save souls through that word. We must not use human methods to force results hastily, but believe the power of the word.

The Lord's road that the saved carry on

In the latter half of Matthew chapter 9 the Lord solved, one after another, death, disease, darkness, and the inability to speak. The ruler asked for help for his dead daughter, and the woman with the flow of blood believed the Lord's power. The two blind men followed asking for mercy, and people brought the man made mute to the Lord. The Lord did not turn away from their faith and their pleas. And at the end He turned the disciples' eyes to the wide field of harvest.

This flow shows the life of us who have been saved. We first ask the Lord for help and receive the remission of sins and new life. Believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the eyes of our hearts are brightened, and with mouths once closed we come to speak the righteousness of God. Then we look at the other souls struggling and wandering without a shepherd. The person who has received grace becomes the worker who delivers grace.

The Lord still asks today, *"Do you believe that I am able to do this?"* Do you believe the facts that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged for them all on the Cross, and rose again? Do you believe that this gospel can make the sinner righteous, bring the spiritually dead to life, open the eyes of the blind, and open the mouth of the mute? When we answer the word, *"Yes, Lord,"* the Lord works through that faith.

Even if the ability we have looks small, there is no need to be discouraged. The Lord of the harvest is God. The Lord has given us the gospel, given us the Holy Spirit, and given us the church. We need only believe the salvation the Lord accomplished and deliver it step by step to one soul. The Lord saves sinners through that word, and raises up the saved again as workers.

We, too, were once people struggling and wandering without a shepherd. But the Lord came to us and let us hear the salvation He accomplished with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross. Believing this gospel, we received the remission of sins and became God's sheep, and now we have been called to the work of leading other souls to the Lord. Carrying the Lord's mercy in our hearts, and praying to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers, we also must take part in this work of the gospel with joy. ✉

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CHAPTER

10

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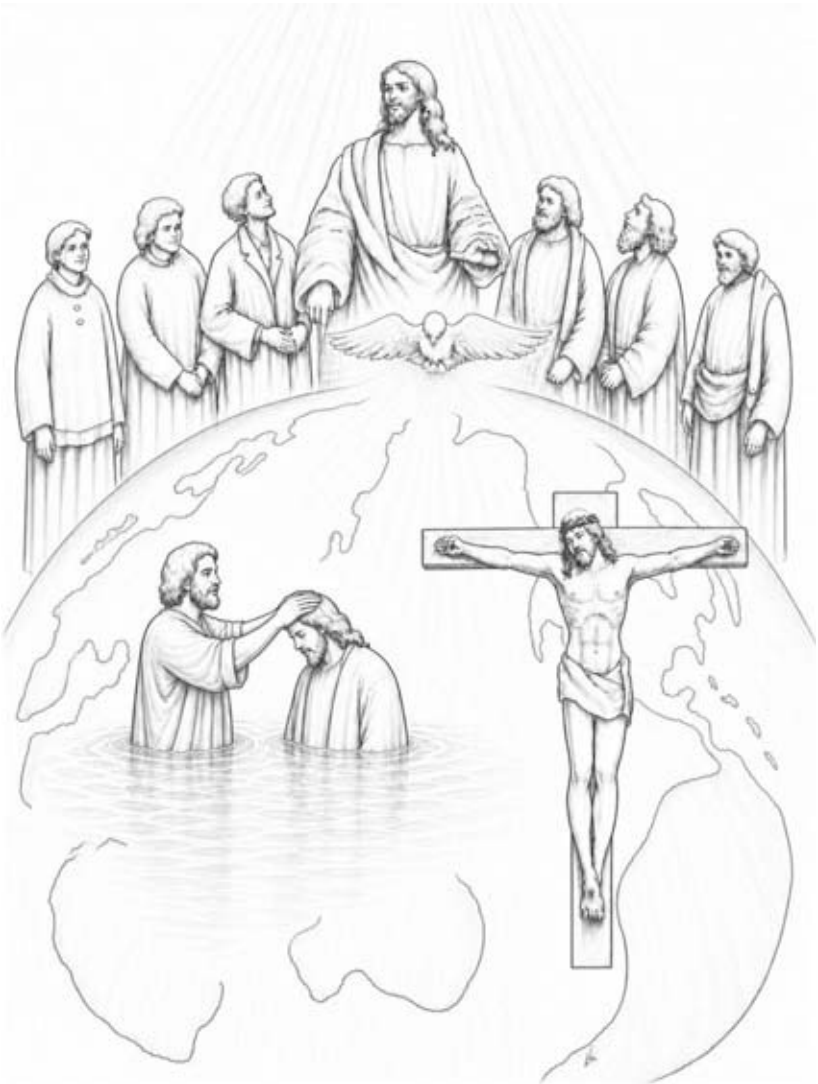

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Matthew Chapter 10

< Matthew 10:1-42 >

“And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: ‘Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. ‘Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city! ‘Behold, I send

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you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. 'Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. 'A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 'Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My

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Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. ‘Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. ‘He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.’”

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 10 is the word Jesus gave as He raised up His twelve disciples as workers of the gospel and sent them out. At the end of chapter 9, Jesus had compassion on the multitudes wandering like sheep without a shepherd and told His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to *“send out laborers into His harvest.”* In chapter 10, following that prayer, Jesus Himself calls the twelve disciples, gives them power, and sends them out.

This chapter goes beyond a simple method of evangelism; it teaches whom the person who preaches the gospel must depend on, how he is to bear rejection and persecution, and what he must put in the first place of his life.

1. Calling the twelve disciples and giving them power (verses 1–4)

Jesus called the twelve disciples and gave them the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal sickness and disease. Verse 1 calls them *"disciples,"* and from verse 2 on they are called *"apostles."*

A disciple is a person who learns from Jesus and follows Him, and an apostle is a person who receives Jesus' authority and is specially sent. The power the disciples had was not originally theirs but was given by Jesus. Therefore a worker of the gospel is not a person who boasts of his own ability but a person who depends on the Lord who sent him and on His word.

The twelve men differed from one another in background and character. There were fishermen; there was Matthew the tax collector; and there were Simon the Cananite and Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus. This clearly testifies to the fact that the Lord does not call only those whose worldly conditions are perfect, but calls insufficient people, trains them with the word, and uses them as workers. The case of Judas Iscariot, however, also clearly reveals the fact that belonging outwardly to the company of the disciples and believing in the Lord with the heart can be two different things.

2. Go to the lost sheep of Israel (verses 5–15)

In this first sending, Jesus told the disciples to go not to the Gentiles and the Samaritans but to *"the lost sheep of the house*

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of Israel." This does not mean that the gospel is forever limited to Israel. The risen Lord later commanded that the gospel be preached to all nations. Here He first had them seek out the people of Israel, who had received God's word and covenant and yet had not met a true shepherd.

The word the disciples were to preach was the news, *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."* It means that Jesus Christ, the King of the kingdom of God, had come, and that the way had been opened for sinners to be saved and enter the kingdom of God.

While having them heal the sick and cast out demons, Jesus said, *"Freely you have received, freely give."* Salvation and the power of the gospel were not obtained with human merit or money, and so they must not be made into merchandise for one's own profit.

The command not to prepare much money and goods for the journey was a word given in the concrete situation of this first sending. It must not be applied mechanically today as meaning that no preparation whatsoever should be made. The central meaning is to depend on God who sends, rather than on material things and circumstances. At the same time, since a worker is worthy of his food, those who work for the gospel may receive fitting care.

Jesus said to wish peace upon the house that receives the gospel, but to shake off the dust from one's feet where the word is stubbornly rejected. The person who preaches the gospel must not hold on to people by force or quarrel with them, but he must also make clearly known the fact that God's judgment follows the rejection of the gospel.

3. A sending like sending sheep into the midst of wolves (verses 16–23)

Jesus told the disciples in advance that their way would not always be a welcomed way.

"Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves"

To be wise does not mean to use falsehood and trickery. It means to avoid unnecessary conflict and to discern people and situations well. At the same time, being pure like doves, we must not use evil methods while claiming to work for the gospel.

The disciples could be dragged before councils and synagogues, before governors and kings. But they did not need to worry excessively about what to say. For at the necessary time the Spirit of their Father would give them the words to testify. Persecution does not mean only the failure of gospel preaching. Rather, it can become an opportunity to testify of the gospel to rulers and to the Gentiles.

The words *"he who endures to the end will be saved"* do not mean that one buys the remission of sins with the act of enduring hardship. They are the words telling us not to abandon our faith in Jesus because of persecution but to keep it to the end. The command to flee to another town when persecuted in one town also means not to seek out suffering recklessly, but to preserve one's life and keep preaching the gospel.

Since there are various interpretations of the words of verse 23, *"you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes,"* it is difficult to fix them to a particular event or date. The clear center is that because the Lord's time is near, we must not stop preaching the gospel even in persecution.

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4. Do not fear men (verses 24–33)

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. If people slandered Jesus as Beelzebub, the disciples who follow Him can also be slandered. Therefore we need not think it strange to be misunderstood and blamed while preaching the gospel.

In this passage Jesus says repeatedly, *"Do not fear."* Man can kill the body but cannot rule over the soul. The One we must truly fear is God, who judges both body and soul.

But to fear God is not to think that God has left us alone with indifference. God, who knows even one sparrow and the very hairs of our head, considers the disciples precious and cares for them. Therefore we must not hide the gospel or deny Jesus because of people's threats.

To confess Jesus before men is not merely to call His name with one's lips; it is to believe and testify who Jesus is and what salvation He has accomplished. We must, however, distinguish between the case of one who, like Peter, stumbles for a moment out of fear and turns back, and the attitude that rejects Jesus and the gospel to the end.

5. The meaning of coming to bring not peace but a sword (verses 34–39)

Jesus' words *"I did not come to bring peace but a sword"* did not command violence or quarreling. They mean that because of the choice to receive Jesus and the gospel, separation and conflict can arise between people, even between family members.

Even within one family, one person may believe in Jesus and another may reject Him. Even if unbelieving family members oppose the gospel, we must not hate them or treat them carelessly. We must love and serve them, but we cannot

abandon Jesus and the truth because of the demands of our family.

The words that we must not love father or mother, son or daughter more than Jesus likewise do not mean that we should not love our family. They mean that we must enthrone Jesus as the final Master and in the first place of our lives.

To take up one's own cross does not mean paying the price of suffering to obtain the remission of sins. It means not avoiding the sacrifices and hardships we come to bear because we follow Jesus. The person who holds on only to a self-centered life and worldly gain loses true life, but the person who lays down his own greed for the Lord and the gospel comes to enjoy eternal life.

6. The reward given to those who receive the disciples (verses 40–42)

Jesus said that the person who receives the disciples receives Jesus Himself, and the person who receives Him receives God the Father.

These words do not mean to worship the disciples like Jesus. Because a disciple is sent by Jesus and delivers His word, receiving the true gospel he preaches becomes the very act of receiving Jesus.

The person who receives and helps prophets, righteous men, and little disciples in faith is acknowledged as having participated in their ministry together. The Lord does not forget even a small act of service like a cup of cold water given to a worker of the gospel.

Here salvation and reward must be distinguished. The remission of sins and eternal life are not obtained by human hospitality or good deeds; they are received by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The reward given for helping

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and serving the workers of the gospel is not the price of salvation but a fruit that appears from saved faith.

The central meaning of Matthew chapter 10

Matthew chapter 10 clearly testifies to the fact that a worker of the gospel is not a person who goes out by his own ability but a person who receives the Lord's calling and power and is sent. On that way there are God's supply and care, but at the same time rejection, slander, persecution, and sacrifice follow as well.

Therefore a disciple must be wise and pure, must fear God rather than men, and must put Jesus in the first place above family and his own life. Also, even though not everyone can directly evangelize in the same way, everyone can participate in the Lord's work by receiving and helping the workers who preach the gospel.

To sum up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 10 is the word in which Jesus sends His disciples into the world with power and the gospel, and commands them not to fear men even amid rejection and persecution, but to serve the Lord first and preach the gospel to the end.

2) Matthew chapter 10 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapter 10 is the word in which Jesus calls His twelve disciples and sends them out to preach the gospel. In this chapter, the baptism and the Cross of Jesus are not directly explained in detail. Therefore we must not force every verse to be interpreted as a symbol of the baptism of Jesus.

But when we examine, within the gospel of the water and

the Spirit, what the disciples were to preach and with what attitude the person who preaches the gospel is to live, the meaning of this chapter becomes still clearer.

The heart of Matthew chapter 10 is as follows.

Jesus calls the workers to whom He will entrust the gospel of salvation.

The disciples must seek out the lost souls fallen in sin.

They must freely deliver the grace of the remission of sins they have freely received.

Even when persecuted because of the gospel, they must not fear men.

They must put Jesus and the gospel before family and their own lives.

Those who receive and help the workers of the gospel also receive the reward of participating in the Lord's work.

1. The power given to the disciples came from the Lord (verses 1–4)

Jesus called the twelve disciples and gave them the power to cast out demons and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease. It was not that the disciples originally had special abilities of their own. The One who called them was Jesus, the One who gave them power was Jesus, and the One who sent them was also Jesus.

This is an important principle for those who preach the gospel today as well. The power that washes away people's sins and causes souls to be born again does not come from the eloquence or character of the evangelist. The power that saves sinners is in the word of the gospel God has accomplished.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took on all the sins of mankind. Through the hands of John the Baptist, the Lord received all the sins of the world passed on to His own

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body, and bearing those sins, He hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died. And by rising from among the dead, He overcame sin and death.

The power to make people believe this fact is not in man but in the word of the gospel and the Holy Spirit. Therefore a true worker of the gospel does not try to display his own ability but must accurately deliver the righteousness Jesus has accomplished.

The fact that Judas Iscariot was also included among the twelve disciples clearly reveals that outward office and true faith can be two different things. Being in the church, holding an office, and doing many works do not automatically mean that one has received the remission of sins. What matters is believing with the heart who Jesus is and how He has removed our sins.

2. The lost sheep are those who wander without finding the solution of their sin (verses 5–6)

Jesus told the disciples to go first to *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* At that time He had them first seek out the people of Israel, who possessed the word of God and yet wandered without meeting a true shepherd.

In today's application, the lost sheep can be said to be those who want to believe in God but do not know how their sins are solved. If a person has led a religious life for a long time and yet sin still remains in his heart, and he thinks he must wash it away with prayers of repentance whenever he sins, he has not yet met the gospel that has completely solved the problem of sin.

Some people depend on their own good deeds and devotion, and some cannot come to God because of their past sins. Others know only the Cross of Jesus and do not know why

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

The Lord tells us not to turn away from such people but to seek them out. What they need is not vague comfort or an exhortation to lead a more diligent religious life. We must preach to them the gospel: that Jesus received their sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross in their place, and that He completed eternal salvation by rising from the dead.

3. *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand"* means that the Savior has come (verse 7)

The word the disciples had to preach was *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."* This is not merely a warning that the end of the world was imminent. It is the declaration that Jesus Christ, the King of the kingdom of God, had come to this earth to save sinners.

A sinner cannot enter the kingdom of God by his own deeds. However good a life he lives and however hard he tries to keep the Law, he cannot by himself remove all the sins he commits with his heart and his acts. Therefore the Son of God Himself came in the flesh of man and fulfilled the righteousness of God.

Jesus said this as He received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River.

"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).

Jesus did not receive baptism because He had sin. The sinless Jesus took on all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John. Having received the sin of the world passed on to Him, Jesus carried that sin to the Cross, shed His blood, and died. And He rose again on the third day.

Therefore, that the kingdom of heaven had drawn near means not that sinners climb up to God by their own merits,

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but that God Himself came to sinners as their Savior. Whoever believes in the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection receives the remission of sins and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God.

4. The words to heal the sick and raise the dead (verse 8)

At that time the disciples actually healed the sick and cast out demons with the special power Jesus had given them. These miracles were signs that the kingdom of God had come, and they testified that Jesus was the promised Savior.

Today we must not apply this word only as meaning that every evangelist must heal physical diseases with miracles. To be healed of a bodily disease is also a thing to be thankful for, but man in the end grows old and dies. The more fundamental problem is that the soul is dead because of sin.

To bring a spiritually dead person to life is to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to him so that he receives the remission of sins. To the person who cannot come to God because of sin, we must say, "Jesus took on even your sins with the baptism He received from John." And we must make known the fact that the Lord bore those sins and paid the full price of sin by being judged on the Cross.

Satan deceives people, saying, "You are still a sinner," and, "You must repent more and live a better life to be saved." But the word of God testifies that Jesus completed the salvation of sinners with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross. When a person believes this word, he is saved from sin and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

5. *"Freely you have received, freely give"* (verses 8–15).

The remission of sins is not something we received by

paying a price. Nor was it obtained with good deeds or devotion, with offerings or fasting prayers. Because Jesus paid the entire price of salvation with His own body, we receive salvation freely by faith.

Jesus received baptism in order to receive our sins passed on to Him, and He shed His blood on the Cross in order to receive the punishment of those sins in our place. Since Jesus has accomplished all this, a sinner receives the remission of sins by believing this fact with the heart.

Therefore we must not make the gospel a means of gaining money or fame. Neither must we make people belong to ourselves or set a price on the grace of salvation. We must deliver the gospel free of charge; yet those who have received the remission of sins can serve the preaching of the gospel together with thanksgiving. This service is not a condition for obtaining salvation but a fruit of faith that comes out of the grace already received.

The word not to prepare much money and goods for the journey also means that a worker of the gospel must not depend on material things but on God who sent him. It does not mean, however, to act irresponsibly without any plan. The worker of the gospel must not covet material things, and the church must responsibly care for those who work for the gospel.

6. Preaching the gospel like sheep sent into the midst of wolves (verses 16–23)

Preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not mean that everyone welcomes it. For this gospel denies man's religious righteousness. People want to become righteous with their own prayers and good deeds, their devotion and repentance. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaims that not human merit but only the righteousness of God that

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Jesus accomplished saves sinners.

For this reason the gospel cannot but collide with human pride. Jesus said that sending out His disciples was like sending them out as "*sheep in the midst of wolves.*" Therefore the person who preaches the gospel must be wise as serpents and pure as doves.

To be wise means to look at the other person's situation and deliver the word appropriately. To be pure means not to deceive people or use worldly tricks. We must not try to subdue the other person with harsh words and human self-confidence. We must preach with a heart that has compassion on souls, and yet speak the heart of the gospel clearly.

When persecuted, we need not worry excessively about what to say. The Holy Spirit brings the word of the gospel to mind and gives the strength to testify. The Holy Spirit is not One who speaks some new, independent gospel; He testifies that the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood is the truth.

The words "*he who endures to the end will be saved*" likewise do not mean that one receives the remission of sins as the merit of enduring hardship. They mean not to abandon the gospel we have already believed because of persecution, but to keep it to the end. The remission of sins is received by believing in the saving work of Jesus, and endurance and faithfulness are fruits that appear from that faith.

7. We must not fear men but confess the Lord (verses 24–33)

Jesus said not to hide the gospel because of people's slander and persecution. Man can harm the body but cannot determine the eternal destiny of the soul. The One we must truly fear is God.

But God is not One who leaves the disciples alone in

indifference. God, who knows even one sparrow and the very hairs of our head, knows and protects those who live for the gospel. Unless God allows it, nothing can happen.

To confess Jesus before men does not stop at merely saying, "I believe in Jesus." It is to believe and testify that Jesus is the Son of God, and what He has done to save us from sin.

When we speak of the blood of the Cross, the baptism Jesus received from John is presupposed. It is because Jesus first received the sin of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John that He received the judgment of that sin on the Cross. If we speak only of the blood apart from the baptism, it does not become clear what sins Jesus bore when He was crucified.

Therefore the faith that rightly confesses Jesus believes together in the Lord's incarnation, the baptism He received from John, the blood and death of the Cross, and the resurrection.

8. The gospel can bring a sword-like division even between family members (verses 34–36)

That Jesus said, *"I did not come to bring peace but a sword,"* was not a word commanding violence and quarreling. It means that a separation of faith can arise between those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and those who depend on human works and religious righteousness.

Even within one family, one person may believe the fact that Jesus took on all sins with the baptism He received from John, while another may not accept it. Some families even persecute the one who believes the gospel for having abandoned their old religion and tradition.

At such a time, the person who believes the gospel must not hate his family or treat them carelessly. He must love his

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family, serve them, and give them the opportunity to hear the gospel. But neither must he deny the truth for the reason of keeping peace with his family. The separation caused by the gospel is not something we create; it arises from each person's choice to accept or reject the truth.

9. We must put the Lord in the first place and take up our own cross (verses 37–39)

Jesus said that he who loves father or mother, son or daughter more than Him is not worthy of Him. This does not mean to abandon or not to love one's family. It means to set Jesus as the final Master and standard of one's life.

Taking up one's own cross also does not mean paying for one's sins with one's own suffering. Jesus paid the full price of our sins on the Cross. The cross the believer bears is not a cross of atonement for obtaining the remission of sins, but the sacrifice he bears while serving the Lord and the gospel after being saved.

The person who believes the fact that Jesus removed our sins with the baptism He received from John and the blood of the Cross must now turn from the life he lived only for himself. He must live thinking not only, "Is it beneficial to me?" but, "What does God delight in?" and, "Is it beneficial to the gospel?"

Such a life is not a condition for maintaining salvation. It is the life in which the person who has already received the perfect remission of sins serves the Lord in gratitude for that grace.

10. Receiving a worker of the gospel is receiving the Lord (verses 40–42)

Jesus said that the person who receives the disciples

receives Jesus Himself, and the person who receives Him receives God the Father.

This does not mean to worship an evangelist or a pastor like Jesus. Because that person is sent by Jesus and preaches the true gospel, receiving the word he preaches becomes the very act of receiving Jesus.

True receiving is not exalting the person's appearance or position but accepting with the heart the gospel he preaches. That is, it is believing the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in the flesh of man to save sinners, and that He took on all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. Bearing the sin of the world He had received with the baptism from John, Jesus hung on the Cross and shed His blood, thereby receiving in our place the judgment of our sins. And He completed salvation by rising again from among the dead. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart receives the remission of all sins and obtains eternal life.

God does not forget even the small act of service of giving a cup of cold water to a worker of the gospel. Even a person who cannot directly preach the word participates in the ministry of preaching the gospel by helping it with prayer, material things, and labor.

Only, we must not confuse salvation and reward. It is not because one gives a cup of cold water that he receives the remission of sins. Salvation is received by believing in the righteousness Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The reward is what God gives for the work of serving the gospel in faith and love after one has received the remission of sins.

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To sum up as a whole

Matthew chapter 10 clearly testifies to the mission and life of the person called to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was judged on the Cross shedding His blood, and saved us wholly from sin by rising from among the dead. The disciples must freely deliver this news of salvation to the lost souls.

On the way of preaching the gospel there can be rejection, slander, and persecution. But we must not hide the truth for fear of men; we must preach the gospel wisely as serpents and purely as doves. Also, the person who has received the remission of sins must put Jesus and the gospel in the first place of his life, bear his own cross for the gospel, and serve the workers of the gospel with love.

To sum up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 10 is the word that teaches us to preach freely the gospel of salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, not to deny the Lord even amid rejection and persecution, and to serve the gospel with Jesus in the first place of our lives. ✉

Matthew Chapter 10

Jesus raises up those who have received the remission of sins as workers of the gospel and sends them out

Introduction

Matthew chapter 10 is the word Jesus gave when, after calling His twelve disciples and giving them power to raise them up as workers of the gospel, He sent them out into the world. Jesus gave the disciples the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease, and He had them go not into the way of the Gentiles but first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The lost sheep were those who, though called God's people, wandered without knowing the true way of the remission of sins.

Jesus said to the disciples, *"Freely you have received, freely give."* The remission of sins and eternal life are not things man can buy with money or merit but the gift of grace Jesus gives freely. Therefore the worker who delivers that gospel also had to depend not on riches nor look for a price, but depend on the Lord who sent him, seek out the worthy, and wish them peace. Upon the house that receives the gospel the peace of God comes, and from the place that rejects it that peace returns.

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Jesus also told the disciples in advance that sending them out was like sending sheep into the midst of wolves. On the way of preaching the gospel there is not only welcome; there can be slander, persecution, and opposition even from those closest to us. Therefore the evangelist must act wisely as serpents and purely as doves, and even when arrested and interrogated, he must not worry about what to say but depend on the Holy Spirit who speaks within. Jesus said not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, and to trust God the Father, who cares even for one sparrow.

Jesus said that He would confess before His Father in heaven the person who confesses Him before men, and deny the person who denies Him. He also said that He came to bring not peace but a sword to the world. This means that when the truth of the gospel is preached, division can arise between those who believe it and those who reject it, even within one family. Therefore the person who loves Jesus more than father or mother, or son or daughter, takes up his own cross and follows the Lord, and loses his own life for the Lord is the one who rather obtains true life. And receiving the worker of the gospel sent in this way is receiving Jesus Himself, and the one who receives him is promised a reward that will never be lost.

The gospel of the kingdom the disciples had to preach is the news of the salvation Jesus completed with the water and the Spirit. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received all the judgment by bearing those sins and dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and overcame the power of sin and death by rising from the dead. A worker of the gospel is not a person who delivers his own wisdom or ability, but a person who delivers, just as he received it, this gospel of the perfect remission of sins that Jesus accomplished.

Jesus raises up those who have received the remission
of sins as workers of the gospel and sends them out

Matthew chapter 10 clearly testifies how the person who has freely received the remission of sins is raised up as a worker of the gospel, with what heart and attitude he goes out into the world, and what he must depend on and whom he must fear in persecution. Now, examining the words of the passage in order, let us look into the will of Jesus who called and sent His disciples, and the promises He gives to the worker who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus sends those who have freely received the remission of sins as workers of the gospel

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. 'Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a

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household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" (Matthew 10:1–15).

After Jesus called the twelve disciples, He gave them the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease. This power did not come from the disciples themselves; it was the power Jesus entrusted to them. The disciples were not people who boasted of their own abilities but servants who, depending on the authority of Jesus, did what He commanded. The ability the worker of the gospel needs today is likewise not human wisdom or eloquence but the power the word of God and the Holy Spirit give.

The list of the twelve apostles includes not only disciples like Peter and John but also Matthew, who had been a tax collector, and Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus. This clearly reveals that the mere fact of being outwardly in the disciple's place and participating in the ministry does not mean that the person has truly been born again. More important than working miracles or holding an office is whether one has believed in the righteousness of God with the heart and received the remission of sins.

Jesus told the disciples not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans but to go first to "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" This does not mean that He would not save the Gentiles; He set the first order of gospel preaching at that time on Israel. After His resurrection, Jesus commanded that the gospel be preached to all nations. God first revealed the Messiah to the people of promise, and then had that gospel of

salvation preached to the whole world.

The word the disciples had to preach was *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."* Because Jesus, the King of the kingdom of God, had come to this earth, the kingdom of heaven had drawn near. Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the way for a sinner to enter the kingdom of God is to believe in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead.

That Jesus told the disciples to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons was a special apostolic mission to reveal that Jesus is the Messiah who rules over life and death, disease and Satan. We must not receive this word only as meaning that every believer today must perform the same physical miracles. The most essential ministry now is still to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who are sick with sin and spiritually dead, so that they receive the remission of sins and new life.

Jesus said, *"Freely you have received, freely give."* The remission of sins and eternal life cannot be bought with money or good deeds; they are the gift Jesus gives by grace. Therefore the worker of the gospel must not make the gospel a means of making money or seeking his own honor. He must freely deliver to others the truth of salvation he received without paying any price. Only, as the words *"a worker is worthy of his food"* say, it is fitting for the church and believers to serve and help with material things the worker who preaches the gospel.

That Jesus told them not to prepare much money and goods for the journey means that the disciples were to go not depending on their own possessions but believing that God

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who sent them would supply what they needed. This cannot be interpreted only as a literal command that no believer may ever carry money or an extra garment. But the principle that, while preaching the gospel, we must lay down the heart that seeks first its own safety and profit, and depend on God, remains the same today.

The disciples had to wish peace first upon whatever household they entered. The peace spoken of here is not merely the comfort of living but the peace of salvation, of being reconciled with God. The person who accepts the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins and comes to be at peace with God. But the person who rejects the gospel cannot receive and enjoy the peace God gives.

Jesus told them to shake off the dust from their feet when leaving the city that would not receive them or hear their words. This also means not to force people to believe the gospel or compel them with endless disputes. If a person still rejects the gospel to the end after it has been clearly testified, the responsibility for that choice lies with the hearer. The act of shaking off the dust from one's feet was not personal anger or revenge but a solemn testimony that the responsibility for rejecting the gospel lay with them.

The reason the city that rejected the gospel receives a greater judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah is that it heard God's completed salvation and yet refused it. More serious than having many sins is not believing, to the very end, in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, who has washed away all those sins. The person who has freely received the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not keep that grace to himself but deliver it freely to the lost souls. This is the way the worker of the gospel, called by Jesus and sent into the world, must live.

Jesus raises up those who have received the remission
of sins as workers of the gospel and sends them out

The worker who has received the gospel of the water and the Spirit must keep the gospel with wisdom and purity even in persecution

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. 'Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:16–23).

Jesus said that sending His disciples out into the world was like sending *"sheep in the midst of wolves."* A sheep is a weak animal that has no strength to fight and defeat a wolf. These words mean that the worker of the gospel is not a person who defends the gospel with the world's power and violence but a person who must depend on Jesus who sent him. Jesus knew beforehand the opposition and persecution His disciples would face, but He nevertheless sent them out to preach the gospel to the lost souls.

In the words *"be wise as serpents and harmless as doves,"* the wisdom of the serpent does not mean deceiving people. It means that when preaching the gospel we discern the other

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person's heart and situation, avoid unnecessary conflict, and deliver the needed word at the fitting time. The purity of the dove means not using falsehood, violence, or evil methods for the sake of the gospel. The worker of the gospel must have wisdom but must not be cunning; he must be pure but must not act without discernment.

When Jesus said, *"Beware of men,"* He did not tell them to suspect or hate everyone. He meant to discern spiritually, since there can be people who oppose the gospel or use good intentions for evil. To entrust oneself to anyone at all or to invite danger merely because one preaches the gospel is not faith. The believer must love people, and yet examine whether their words and deeds accord with the word of God.

That the disciples were persecuted in councils and synagogues and dragged before governors and kings was not their failure. God rather used those places as opportunities for the gospel to be testified to rulers and Gentiles. The world can bind the worker of the gospel, but it cannot bind the word of God. Even the hardships suffered because of the gospel can become, in God's hands, channels that reveal the truth of salvation.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the word the disciples had to testify amid persecution is the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. In the heart of the person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit dwells, and the Holy Spirit causes him to testify of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said not to worry about what to say when taken away.

This does not mean that we do not need to learn the word in ordinary times or prepare to preach the gospel. It is the promise that when the disciples were placed in the extreme situations of trials and persecution, the Holy Spirit would bring the necessary word to mind and help them testify boldly. The worker of the gospel must depend not on his own eloquence but on the Holy Spirit, who testifies of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Because of the gospel, conflict can arise even between brother and brother, parents and children. This does not mean that the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must break up his home. Rather, he must love and serve his family; but when the demands of his family collide with the truth of God, he must not abandon Jesus and the gospel. The saved person does not stand against his family; he must testify of the gospel to them with love so that they too receive the remission of sins.

The words *"he who endures to the end will be saved"* do not mean that man obtains the remission of sins by the act of bearing hardship. The remission of sins is received freely by believing in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. To endure here means, amid persecution and hatred, not to deny Jesus who saved us and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but to hold on to them by faith. The faith that holds on to the gospel to the end is not an act that pays the price of salvation; it clearly testifies to the fact that the person truly believes the gospel.

Jesus said to flee to another town when persecuted in one town. The worker of the gospel must not deliberately seek out suffering in order to boast of martyrdom. If there is a way of escape, it is wisdom to escape and continue preaching the gospel in another place. Moving to another region when the

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way is blocked in one place is not cowardice; it can be obedience for delivering the gospel to more souls.

The words *"you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes"* testify that the preaching of the gospel and the coming of the Lord are closely connected. These words do not tell man to calculate the date of the Second Coming; they mean that until the Lord comes, the work of preaching the gospel still remains. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not hide the gospel for fear of the world's hatred, but must testify of the gospel of salvation with the wisdom of the serpent and the purity of the dove until the Lord comes again.

Those who confess Jesus as the true Savior preach the gospel without fearing the world

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 'Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. 'Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess

before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:24–33).

Jesus said that a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. Although Jesus did the good works of healing the sick and saving sinners, the Pharisees slandered Him as Beelzebub, the ruler of demons. Therefore the disciples who follow Jesus can also receive misunderstanding and blame from people. We cannot preach the gospel expecting only better treatment than our Lord received.

But neither should we regard every criticism or opposition as persecution suffered for the gospel. Being criticized for one's own rudeness or wrong behavior must be distinguished from being hated for preaching the truth of Jesus. The believer must avoid faults that deserve people's blame and live a good life, but he must not hide or alter the truth because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is rejected.

Jesus said, *"There is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known."* For now it may look as though the gospel of the water and the Spirit is rejected by people and false gospels are more widely accepted. But in the end the fact that the righteousness of God Jesus accomplished is the true salvation will be revealed clearly. The hidden motives of those who opposed the gospel, and the faith of the believers who believed and served the truth, will all be brought to light before God.

The words *"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops"* are the command to preach openly to the world the truth of salvation the disciples learned from Jesus. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not knowledge that only a few people are to know in secret. The fact that Jesus received all the sins of

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the world passed on to Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead must be delivered to all people.

Jesus said not to fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, and to fear God, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Man can afflict our body and even kill it, but he cannot take away the eternal life we have received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore what the believer must fear most is not the world's power or public opinion but God, who judges all people righteously.

To fear God does not mean to live in terror. It means not to abandon the word of God because of people's threats, and to acknowledge God as the highest authority. The person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus knows God not only as the Judge but as the Father who saved him. Therefore he can revere God above the world's threats and hold on to the gospel.

Jesus said that not even one sparrow of very small price falls to the ground without the permission of God the Father. God knows us so minutely that He numbers even all the hairs of the believer's head. This word does not mean that no suffering or death ever comes to the believer. It means that even in suffering nothing happens outside God's knowledge and permission, and that God keeps the soul of the saved believer to the end.

"You are of more value than many sparrows" is a word of comfort for the believer who meets hardship while preaching the gospel. Though he may look forsaken in people's eyes, he is a precious child to God. Even if the world regards the believer as worthless, God knows the person saved by the baptism and the blood of Jesus as one of His own people and

cares for him. Therefore the believer must trust God's protection, and yet preach the gospel wisely without recklessly seeking out danger.

To confess Jesus before men does not stop at merely saying with the lips, "I believe in Jesus." It is to believe and confess with the heart that Jesus is the Son of God and the true Savior who received our sins passed on to Him with His baptism and saved us with the Cross and the resurrection. It is also not hiding or distorting this truth of salvation for fear of people's hatred.

Conversely, denying Jesus does not refer only to a single mistake of stumbling momentarily in fear. Peter too denied Jesus three times, but he repented, returned, and testified of the gospel. The more fundamental denial is not believing but rejecting to the end the salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism and the Cross. The person who truly believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit may waver for a moment because of his weakness, but by the help of the Holy Spirit he rises again and confesses Jesus as his Savior.

The faith that confesses Jesus comes not from human boldness but from the assurance of the completed salvation. The person who believes the fact that all his sins were passed on to Jesus and that the judgment of those sins was finished on the Cross possesses the eternal life the world cannot take away. Therefore the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not hide Jesus for fear of men, but boldly preaches the gospel of salvation with the faith that God considers him precious.

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The true peace Jesus gives can be obtained when we believe the word of truth and deny ourselves

"'Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:34–39).

Jesus said that He came to bring not peace but a sword to the world. These words do not mean that Jesus came to stir up violence and quarrels among people. The sword here means the word of truth that exposes man's heart and divides faith from unbelief. Even when hearing the same gospel, one person lays himself down before the word of God and believes, while another opposes the gospel to keep his own thoughts and religious righteousness.

Jesus is the King of peace, and He came to reconcile to God the sinners who had become His enemies. But true peace with God is not obtained by turning away from the truth and compromising conveniently with people. First the sinner must acknowledge before the word of God that he is a sinner who deserves judgment, and believe the salvation God has accomplished. An outward harmony achieved without believing the truth cannot save the soul.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the sword of truth Jesus brought exposes man's self-righteousness and false doctrines of salvation. Jesus received

all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all sins and enjoys true peace with God, but the person who holds on to his own righteousness and religious works cannot accept this gospel.

Even within one family, one person may believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and another may not. At such a time spiritual conflict can arise between the one who believes and the one who does not. Family members may fail to understand the person who has come to hold a different faith, blame him, or press him to return to his old religion. Jesus told them in advance that such opposition could arise even from one's closest family.

But these words are not a command to hate parents or children or to stir up discord in the home on purpose. The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must rather honor his parents, love his family, and pray for their souls. Only, if what the family demands is something that makes him deny Jesus and the gospel, he must not give up the truth for the sake of his family's approval. The believer must preach the gospel with patience, not with a heart that wants to fight his family, but with a heart that wants them also to receive the remission of sins.

That Jesus said that he who loves father or mother, son or daughter more than Him is not worthy of Him was not a word forbidding love for one's family. It means to put Jesus, the source of all love, in the highest place of one's life. If we put our family before Jesus, we may abandon the truth because of their opposition and even come to follow their wrong demands. But if we love Jesus most, we can serve our family rightly, not

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with our own feelings or greed but with the love of God.

In the words "take up your cross and follow Me," one's own cross is distinguished from the Cross of atonement that Jesus bore. Only Jesus bore the Cross that washes away our sins, and no man can atone for his own sins by suffering much. The cross the believer must bear is to deny his own thoughts and desires in order to believe and follow the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and to bear by faith the losses and hardships that follow because of the gospel.

One's own cross does not unconditionally refer to every inconvenience or disease in life either. The pain suffered because of one's own fault must be distinguished from the suffering met while following Jesus. To take up one's own cross is not to compromise the gospel to gain the approval of family and the world, but to follow the will of God in the place entrusted to him. This is not seeking out pain by one's own will but a life of obedience that depends on the Holy Spirit.

The words *"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it"* do not mean that one obtains the remission of sins by the act of sacrifice or martyrdom. The remission of sins and eternal life are received by believing in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. But the person who denies Jesus and the gospel to the end in order to keep his own safety and profit in the world cannot obtain eternal life. Conversely, even if a person loses worldly gain or the life of his flesh because of his faith in Jesus, he obtains eternal life in the Lord.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a person who abandons his family, but a person who, loving Jesus most, delivers the way of true life to his family as well. Even when conflict arises because of the truth, he must not respond with violence or hatred but keep the

gospel with love and patience. Not giving up the truth of salvation to gain the world's temporary peace, but believing and following to the end the gospel Jesus has completed—this is the faith that takes up one's cross and follows the Lord.

Receiving and serving those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit is receiving and serving Jesus

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:40–42).

After sending His twelve disciples out to preach the gospel, Jesus said that he who receives them receives Jesus, and he who receives Jesus receives God the Father who sent Him. It was because the disciples did not go representing themselves but were sent with the word and the authority of Jesus. Therefore, to receive the disciples means not merely liking their character or appearance but accepting by faith the gospel of Jesus Christ they preach.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the word the worker of the gospel must preach is the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. Jesus took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. To

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accept by faith the words of the person who preaches this gospel of the water and the Spirit is to accept Jesus who sent him, and ultimately to accept the plan of salvation of God the Father who sent Jesus.

This does not mean, however, that we must unconditionally obey every word of a person who holds the office of pastor or evangelist. Whether he is a true worker sent by Jesus must be discerned by whether he preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit according to the Scriptures. If he preaches only the Cross while leaving out the baptism of Jesus, or teaches that one obtains the remission of sins by human works and merits, his words do not agree with the gospel of God. The faith that receives a worker of the gospel is not blindly following a man; it is the faith that confirms with the Scriptures the word of God delivered through him and accepts it.

To "receive a prophet in the name of a prophet" is to accept him as a person who delivers the word God has entrusted to him. The person who receives a prophet participates in the word and ministry that prophet delivers, and so he comes to receive a prophet's reward together with him. Even a person who cannot go to a distant place and preach the gospel himself comes to participate in the fruit of that gospel preaching by helping the worker of the gospel with prayer, material things, and service.

To "receive a righteous man in the name of a righteous man" is to acknowledge that the person is one of God's people who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and to treat him with love. The righteous man here is not a person whose conduct is originally perfect, but a person who has received the remission of all his sins by believing in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus and has been justified by God. To see the faith within

him and receive him as God's family, even if his personality or way of life differs from ours, is the faith that receives a righteous man.

The *"little ones"* of whom Jesus spoke do not mean people of high position and fame in the world. They refer to the disciples who believe in and follow Jesus but look small and insignificant in people's eyes. Jesus considers even one such disciple precious, and He accepts even a small act of service done to him as done to Himself. The believer's worth comes not from the position or wealth he has in the world but from the fact that he belongs to Jesus Christ.

A cup of cold water is a small and ordinary act of service that anyone can offer. Jesus does not forget even the small services done for the gospel. Serving a meal to a worker of the gospel, providing him a place to stay, helping with needed material things, comforting a weary heart, and sharing gospel literature can all be included here. What matters is not the size of the deed but whether it was done with the faith and love that serve a disciple of Jesus.

The words *"he shall by no means lose his reward"* do not mean that one can buy the remission of sins or heaven with the good deed of giving a cup of cold water. The remission of sins and eternal life are received freely only by believing in the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. The reward spoken of here is the praise and recompense God gives for the fact that a person already saved participated in the ministry of the gospel by faith and served the believers. Salvation is received by grace, but God remembers the labor done in faith after one is saved.

The person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot say that he loves Jesus while turning away from the work of preaching the gospel and from the brothers and

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sisters of the gospel. We must consider precious those whom Jesus considers precious, help one another with the gifts each has received, and serve so that the gospel is preached. Even a small love like a cup of cold water given for the gospel becomes service done directly to Jesus, and the Lord never forgets that labor of faith. ✉

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 10

[Question] 1. What is the central content of Matthew chapter 10?

The central content of Matthew chapter 10 is that Jesus chose His twelve disciples as apostles, gave them the power to preach the gospel, and sent them out, teaching the attitude and resolution an evangelist must keep.

Jesus gave the twelve disciples the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease. And He commanded them to go to the lost sheep of Israel and preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

The disciples were not to prepare much material means for their evangelistic journey or depend on it, but were to believe that God would supply what they needed. They were also to stay in a worthy house that received the gospel and wish it peace, and to shake off the dust from their feet toward those who rejected the gospel.

Jesus also told the disciples in advance that they would suffer persecution, hatred, and hardship while preaching the gospel. But He told them not to fear men, but to fear God, who is able to destroy both body and soul, and to endure to the end.

He also said that whoever confesses Jesus before men, Jesus will also confess before God, but whoever denies Jesus, Jesus will also deny. To follow Jesus and the gospel, we must love the Lord more than our family or our own life and take up our own cross.

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Finally, Jesus said that receiving His disciples and the workers of the gospel is the same as receiving Jesus Himself, and that those who serve them will receive a reward from God.

Matthew chapter 10, therefore, is the word that teaches the calling and mission of the gospel evangelist, the method of evangelism, the faith that endures persecution, the resolution of the disciple who follows Jesus, and the reward that follows it.

[Question] 2. Explain the power the disciples received, listed in Matthew 10:1.

Jesus gave the twelve disciples the following power.

The power to cast out unclean spirits, the power to heal all kinds of sickness, and the power to heal all kinds of disease

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease" (Matthew 10:1).

This power did not come from the disciples themselves; it was the power Jesus gave them so that they could carry out the mission of preaching the gospel.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 10:1–2, what kind of person do *"disciples"* and *"apostles"* each refer to, and how do they differ in role?

A disciple is a person who follows Jesus, learning the word and being trained, and an apostle is a person who has received power and a mission from Jesus and has been sent out into the world.

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother" (Matthew 10:1–2).

Matthew 10:1 calls the twelve men disciples, but verse 2 calls them apostles. They were first disciples who followed Jesus and learned from Him, and afterward they became apostles who received power and the mission of preaching the gospel from Jesus and were sent out.

The difference between the two names, therefore, is as follows.

Disciple: a person who follows Jesus and learns from Him

Apostle: a person whom Jesus sent out, entrusting him with a special mission

Every apostle is a disciple of Jesus, but not every disciple who followed Jesus was included among the twelve apostles. Here the apostles refer to the twelve men specially sent out to preach the gospel, entrusted with the authority and the word of Jesus.

[Question] 4. Write in order the names of the twelve disciples recorded in Matthew and in Acts (Matthew 10:2–4), and explain their faith.

The names of the twelve apostles recorded in Matthew 10:2–4 are as follows.

1. Simon, who is called Peter, 2. Andrew, Peter's brother, 3. James the son of Zebedee, 4. John, James's brother, 5. Philip, 6. Bartholomew, 7. Thomas, 8. Matthew the tax collector, 9.

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James the son of Alphaeus, 10. Thaddaeus, 11. Simon the Cananite, and 12. Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Jesus.

Acts 1:13 records the names of the eleven apostles, with Judas Iscariot omitted, in the following order.

1. Peter, 2. John, 3. James, 4. Andrew, 5. Philip, 6. Thomas, 7. Bartholomew, 8. Matthew, 9. James the son of Alphaeus, 10. Simon the Zealot, and 11. Judas the son of James.

"Simon the Cananite" in Matthew and *"Simon the Zealot"* in Acts are the same person. Here *"Cananite"* does not mean a native of the region of Canaan but is a word carrying the meaning of a Zealot. Also, *"Thaddaeus"* in Matthew can be understood as the same person as the apostle recorded in Acts as *"Judas the son of James."*

Judas Iscariot does not appear in the list of Acts 1:13 because he betrayed Jesus and abandoned the office of apostle. According to the word of the Scriptures, the apostles raised up a person to take over his office. The qualification was to be a person who had accompanied the apostles from the baptism of John until the day Jesus was taken up, had witnessed the ministry of Jesus, and could testify of His resurrection together with them. Two men, Joseph and Matthias, were proposed, and after praying they cast lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. The one who joined the number of the twelve apostles in Acts in place of Judas Iscariot, therefore, is Matthias.

The twelve apostles of Acts, arranged in their completed order, are as follows.

1. Peter, 2. John, 3. James, 4. Andrew, 5. Philip, 6. Thomas, 7. Bartholomew, 8. Matthew, 9. James the son of Alphaeus, 10. Simon the Zealot, 11. Judas the son of James, and 12. Matthias.

The disciples of Jesus were not originally people of special learning or high social position. Peter and Andrew, James and John were fishermen of Galilee, and Matthew was a tax

collector despised by the Jews. Simon was a man called the Zealot. Though they differed from one another in occupation, character, and background, Jesus called them Himself and made them His disciples. They became apostles not because of human qualifications or outstanding abilities but because of the choice and grace of Jesus.

Their faith was above all the faith that believed Jesus to be the Son of God and the Savior and followed His calling. The disciples left their livelihoods and their worldly lives behind and followed Jesus, and they preached the gospel depending on the power and the word Jesus gave them. They did not cast out demons or heal the sick by their own ability; they did those works by believing and obeying the authority Jesus gave them. The faith of an apostle, therefore, was not a faith that boasted of its own ability but a faith that depended on the word and power of the Lord.

The faith of the disciples was not perfect and unshakable from the beginning. There were times when they failed to understand the words of Jesus properly, and they even argued over who was the greater. Peter denied Jesus three times, and Thomas could not believe until he confirmed the risen Jesus for himself. When Jesus was arrested, the disciples even fled in fear. But such weaknesses could not nullify the grace of the Lord who had raised them up as apostles.

Jesus taught His weak disciples with the word and brought them up Himself. They became witnesses who saw and heard not only the words and the power of Jesus, but also His saving work: that Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and then rose again. In particular, Acts, explaining the qualification of the one who would become an apostle, states that the starting point of that

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testimony is *"from the baptism of John."* This clearly testifies that the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus are not separate events but one connected work of salvation, and that this was the heart of the gospel the apostles had to testify.

The disciples who met the risen Jesus came to believe still more clearly that Jesus is the Savior of the world. And when the Holy Spirit worked among them, those who had been hiding in fear were changed into witnesses who boldly preached the gospel. They preached the fact that Jesus is the Son of God, that He took on the sins of mankind, and that He completed salvation with the judgment of the Cross and the resurrection. It was because they firmly believed this truth that many apostles could suffer for the gospel and even lay down their lives.

Judas Iscariot, however, though he went about with the other disciples and received the office and power of an apostle, did not follow Jesus and His word in faith to the end. He loved money, betrayed Jesus, and in the end abandoned the office of apostle given to him. Belonging outwardly to the company of Jesus' disciples and doing works of power do not by themselves prove true faith. What matters is believing with the heart in Jesus and in the gospel of salvation He accomplished, and following Him to the end.

The faith of the twelve apostles, therefore, does not mean a human perfection without any weakness. It is the faith that believes in Jesus Christ as the Savior, receives into the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished, and preaches the gospel depending on the word of the Lord. The apostles freely delivered to others the salvation and the power of the gospel they had freely received from the Lord. Those who have become disciples of Jesus today must likewise live not boasting of their own abilities or fleshly miracles, but with

the faith that heals souls sick with sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and testifies of the salvation of Jesus Christ.

[Question] 5. Describe each of the eleven disciples recorded in Matthew 10:2–4, apart from Matthew.

The particulars of the eleven apostles recorded in Matthew 10:2–4, excluding Matthew, are as follows.

"Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matthew 10:2–4).

Peter

His original name was Simon, and he was Andrew's brother. He was the son of Jonah and a fisherman of Galilee. Jesus gave him the name Peter, and he often spoke or acted as the representative of the twelve disciples. He denied Jesus three times, but he was afterward restored and worked as a central apostle of the early Church.

Andrew

He was Peter's brother and originally a fisherman. Hearing the words of John the Baptist, he followed Jesus, and he led his brother Peter to Jesus. In the event of the five loaves and two fish, he introduced to Jesus the boy who had the five barley loaves and two fish.

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James the son of Zebedee

He was John's elder brother, the son of Zebedee, and originally a fisherman. He was a disciple who accompanied Jesus at important events together with Peter and John. He was killed with the sword by Herod and is recorded as the first martyr among the twelve apostles (Acts 12:2).

John

He was the son of Zebedee and the brother of James. Originally a fisherman, he accompanied Jesus at the Transfiguration and at the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane together with Peter and James. Jesus added to James and John the name *"Sons of Thunder."*

Philip

He was from Bethsaida of Galilee, the same town as Peter and Andrew. After receiving the call of Jesus, he went to find Nathanael and introduced Jesus to him. He also appears in the event of the five loaves and two fish and in the event where the Greeks wished to meet Jesus.

Bartholomew

In the lists of the apostles in the Gospels he is recorded together with Philip. The Scriptures do not show his particulars and deeds in detail. He is generally regarded as the same person as Nathanael in the Gospel of John, but the Scriptures do not directly state that the two are the same person.

Thomas

He was also called *"Didymus,"* a name that means twin. At first he could not believe the news of Jesus' resurrection, but after meeting the risen Jesus in person he confessed his faith.

Though he is known only as the disciple who doubted, he also showed such devotion as to say that they should go and die together with Jesus.

James the son of Alphaeus

He is a person distinguished from James the son of Zebedee. Though he is one of the twelve apostles, his personal deeds are hardly recorded in the Scriptures.

Thaddaeus

He is the person recorded in Luke and in Acts as *"Judas the son of James."* He is a different person from Judas Iscariot. In the Gospel of John, he asked Jesus why He would manifest Himself to His disciples and not to the world.

Simon the Cananite

In Luke and in Acts he is recorded as *"Simon called the Zealot"* or *"Simon the Zealot."* He is a person distinguished from Simon who is called Peter. His concrete deeds are not recorded in detail in the Scriptures.

Judas Iscariot

He was chosen as one of the twelve apostles but betrayed Jesus. He kept the disciples' money box, and he handed Jesus over to the chief priests for thirty pieces of silver. He is recorded last even in the list in Matthew and is described as the one *"who also betrayed Him."*

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[Question] 6. In Matthew 10:5–6, to which people did Jesus send the twelve disciples for the ministry of the gospel?

Jesus commanded the disciples not to go into the way of the Gentiles or into a city of the Samaritans, but to "*go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*"

"*These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5–6).*

This means that the disciples' first evangelistic ministry at that time had to be directed first to Israel, God's covenant people. Afterward the risen Jesus widened the scope of evangelism so that the gospel would be preached to all nations.

[Question] 7. In Matthew 10:7–8, what was the ministry the disciples carried out to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit?

The works the disciples were to do for the ministry of the gospel are as follows.

Preaching that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing the lepers, casting out demons, and freely giving what they had freely received.

"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:7–8).

Jesus gave the twelve disciples the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and disease.

With this power received from Jesus, the disciples actually healed the sick and cast out demons, and they testified that Jesus Christ is the Savior sent by God and that the kingdom of heaven had drawn near.

This ministry is also connected with the spiritual ministry of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit today. To preach the gospel to a person dying separated from God because of sin, so that he obtains eternal life, is to raise the dead; and to preach the gospel of the remission of sins to a person suffering over himself, unable to stop sinning, is to cleanse the lepers. To set right with the word of God a heart sickened by false doctrines and wrong thoughts is to heal the sick, and to drive out with the gospel of truth the work of evil spirits that deceive people is to cast out demons.

[Question] 8. Why does Jesus choose and use, from among the churches on this earth, those who believe in and testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit?

The standard by which God uses a church lies not in the name or size of its denomination but in whether it rightly believes and preaches the gospel and what its purpose is. The fact of being ‘chosen and used’ is also not a ground for a sense of superiority but a calling to responsibility and service.

The reason Jesus uses the churches and believers who believe in and testify of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not that they are better than others or have more religious ability. It is to preach to the people of the world the gospel of the remission of sins Jesus accomplished, to save souls, and to reveal only the righteousness and grace of God.

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However, a church does not automatically become God's church because it claims, "We are chosen." We must examine not the name or size of the denomination but whether it rightly believes and preaches the gospel the Scriptures testify.

1. Because the gospel is the power of God that saves people

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

The power that saves people from sin does not lie in the size of a church or the eloquence of an evangelist. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is itself the power of God that saves the one who believes.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word that Jesus accomplished salvation as follows.

• By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him and took them on.

• Bearing those sins, He was judged and died on the Cross.

• By rising again on the third day, He overcame sin and death.

• To the person who believes this fact He gives the perfect remission of sins and eternal life.

God uses those who believe this gospel so that through them other souls may also hear and believe the salvation Jesus accomplished.

2. To have them deliver the light of salvation to those in darkness

"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His

marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The purpose for which God called us out of darkness is not so that we alone would receive the remission of sins and live comfortably. It is to have us deliver the salvation God has accomplished to those who are still in darkness.

Those who do not know the remission of sins struggle to wash away their sins with prayers of repentance and good deeds. Through the mouths of those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God has the fact delivered that Jesus has already removed all sins.

3. Because the gospel is heard through those who preach it

"And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14–15).

God recorded the gospel in the Scriptures, but at the same time He sent those who believe that gospel to explain and deliver it to others.

A person may have the Scriptures and yet not know how the baptism of Jesus and the Cross are connected. So God first has the meaning of the word explained in detail through a person who has believed the gospel, and helps the hearer confirm it directly in the Scriptures.

It is not the evangelist who saves people. The evangelist delivers the seed of the gospel; the One who makes people understand the word and be born again is the Holy Spirit.

4. To establish the church as the pillar and ground of the truth

"The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

The church must be a place that preserves and delivers the

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truth of God, not a place that keeps the traditions of men and the thoughts of its leader.

The reason God uses the church that believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is so that the truth of the remission of sins may be delivered to the next generation without being corrupted.

The church must do the following works.

• It must teach the word of the Scriptures rightly.

• It must clearly preach the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus.

• It must not mix human works and merits into the gospel.

• It must bring up the newly saved with the word.

• It must raise them up so that they too can preach the gospel to others.

"The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

The gospel does not end with one person; it must keep being delivered through faithful men to the next person and the next generation.

5. To save the souls that are like sheep without a shepherd

Jesus saw the people wandering without knowing the gospel of the remission of sins, and He had compassion on them.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

Today as well, there may be many people who attend church and yet struggle without the assurance of the remission of sins. Believing that their original sin has been remitted but that their personal sins must be washed daily with prayers of

repentance, they live under condemnation and fear.

Jesus pities such people rather than condemning them. So He sends those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit as workers, to have them deliver the fact that Jesus has removed all sins once and for all, forever.

6. To reveal the grace of God, not man

God does not necessarily use only those who are worldly wise, strong, and famous.

"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27).

The purpose is clear.

"That no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29).

When a weak person preaches the gospel and a soul is saved, the fact is revealed that the power lies not in the evangelist but in God.

Therefore the worker of the gospel must not boast, saying, "God uses us because we are special." Rather, he must be thankful and humble, saying, "We are weak, but God has entrusted the precious gospel to us."

7. To preach the gospel to all nations

After His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples as follows.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19).

The gospel of the water and the Spirit must not stay within one people, one region, or one church. It must be preached to all the people of the world.

Through the churches that believe the gospel, God

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accomplishes the following works.

• He sends evangelists to where there is no gospel.

• He has gospel books translated and delivered.

• He has the gospel explained to those who have not received the remission of sins.

• He has the saved brought up as disciples.

• He raises up new workers of the gospel.

After entrusting this mission, Jesus promised to be with His disciples always.

"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

8. Being chosen and used is not superiority but responsibility

To be called to believe and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a privilege that allows us to despise other churches and people. It rather means that we have been entrusted with a greater responsibility.

The church and the believer entrusted with the gospel must guard against the following: exalting their own organization or leader above the gospel, despising others with the words "only we are chosen," putting the traditions of the church before the Scriptures, boasting of evangelistic results and the size of the church, and trying to gain money, fame, and power by using the gospel.

Using the phrase "the gospel of the water and the Spirit" with the lips does not automatically bring God's approval. We must examine whether one actually preaches the righteousness of Jesus the Scriptures testify, and whether the fruits of love and humility worthy of that gospel appear.

Conclusion

The reasons Jesus chooses and uses the churches and believers who believe in and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit are as follows.

• To have sinners hear the gospel of salvation.

• To deliver the light of Jesus to those in darkness.

• To save the souls wandering like sheep without a shepherd.

• To preserve the word of truth and deliver it to the next generation.

• To raise up workers of the gospel and send them to all nations.

• To reveal the grace and power of God, not the ability of man.

• To return all the glory to God.

To sum up in one sentence, it is as follows.

The reason Jesus chooses and uses those who believe in and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not that they are superior to others, but that through them He may preach the completed gospel of the remission of sins to the whole world and save many souls, so that the saved may return glory and praise to God.

[Question] 9. In Matthew 10:9–10, what things were the disciples to refrain from taking when they went out to evangelize?

The disciples were not to take the following things when they set out on their evangelistic journey.

Gold, silver, or copper to put in their money belts, a bag for the journey, two tunics, sandals, and staffs

"Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food" (Matthew 10:9–10).

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The disciples were not to depend on the material things they had prepared, but were to believe that God would supply what was needed for the gospel.

[Question] 10. According to Matthew 10:11, in which house were the disciples to stay, and how were they to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit there until they left that city or town?

Whatever city or town the disciples entered, they were to find a worthy person there and stay in his house. And they were to keep lodging there until they left that region.

"'Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out" (Matthew 10:11).

The *"worthy"* person here does not mean a person who is rich or can provide good lodging, but a person who seeks God, wants to receive the remission of sins, and gladly receives the gospel and the disciples who preach it. The disciples were not to choose their lodging by people's outward circumstances, but were to see who would receive the word of God with a sincere heart.

When the disciples found the house of a worthy person, they were to stay there until they left that city or town. They were not to move from this house to that house just because a house appeared where they could receive more comfortable and better treatment. Staying in one place, they were to deliver the word continually to the people of that house and of the region, and to teach and bring up the souls that received the gospel.

The gospel the disciples had to deliver is the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus received all the sins of the

world passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and then rose again, thereby saving sinners. The person who receives this gospel receives the remission of sins and comes to enjoy peace with God.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 10:12–13, when the disciples entered a house to stay, what word of peace were they to deliver for that house?

Jesus said that when the disciples entered the house they had chosen for lodging, they were to wish peace upon that house.

"And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you" (Matthew 10:12–13).

The disciples, therefore, were to greet the house with a blessing that wished it peace.

This peace was not merely an everyday greeting; it was a prayer that the house would receive the word of the kingdom of God that Jesus and the disciples preached, and enjoy the peace and blessing God gives.

• If the house received the gospel and the disciples, the peace the disciples had wished would come upon that house.

• If the house did not receive the gospel and the disciples, that family could not enjoy the peace of God the disciples had wished for them, and the peace the disciples had wished, with the blessing that follows it, would return to the disciples who had wished it.

Therefore, when the disciples entered a house, they were not to demand their own treatment first, but were to bless that

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family and wish them the peace of God.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 10:14, what were the disciples to do when people would not receive them or hear their words?

Jesus said that if the master of a house would not receive the disciples and would not hear the word they preached, they were to depart from that house or city and shake off the dust from their feet.

"And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet" (Matthew 10:14).

The act of shaking off the dust from their feet was a sign showing that the responsibility for rejecting the gospel lay with them. The disciples were not to force people to accept the gospel or quarrel with them; after preaching the gospel, if it was not received, they were to leave that place.

[Question] 13. In Matthew 10:15, what punishment will the house or city that does not receive the gospel of truth preached by the disciples receive on the day of judgment?

The place that rejected the disciples and the gospel they preached will receive a heavier judgment on the day of judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah.

"Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" (Matthew 10:15).

Sodom and Gomorrah were judged for their great wickedness, but deliberately rejecting the disciples Jesus sent and the word of the gospel is refusing the opportunity of salvation God has given, and therefore it bears a heavier responsibility.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 10:16–23, what faith and endurance does Jesus say the disciples sent into the world for the preaching of the gospel must have in the face of persecution?

Jesus set before the disciples going out into the world the following conduct and attitude.

• They must be wise as serpents and pure as doves.

• They must beware of those who hinder and persecute the gospel.

• They must testify of the gospel even when dragged before governors and kings.

• They must not worry about what to say but depend on the Holy Spirit.

• They must endure to the end even when hated for the name of Jesus.

• When persecuted in one town, they must flee to another town and keep preaching the gospel.

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

"But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matthew 10:19–20).

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"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:22–23).

The disciples, therefore, must not fear persecution or act recklessly, but must keep wisdom and purity and preach the gospel to the end, depending on the Holy Spirit.

[Question] 15. In Matthew 10:17, 18, and 22, what persecutions will the disciples receive from people for the gospel?

For preaching the name of Jesus and the gospel, the disciples will suffer the following hardships from people.

- They will be delivered up to councils.
- They will be scourged in the synagogues.
- They will be dragged before governors and kings.
- They will be hated by all.

"But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:17–18).

"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

But these hardships come not because the disciples have done wrong, but because they testify of Jesus and the gospel. Jesus told them to endure to the end even in persecution.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 10:21, how far will the rejection between family members or between people because of Christ and the gospel reach?

Hatred toward Christ and the gospel reaches even the point where the closest family members deliver one another up to death.

"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Matthew 10:21).

This word means that the conflict caused by the gospel can enter even between brother and brother, parents and children, leading to extreme persecution in which they oppose one another and cause one another to be put to death. It reveals that the persecution the disciples would receive would not stop at social blame but could reach the level of threatening their lives.

[Question] 17. Explain the meaning of the words about the cities of Israel and the coming of the Son of Man recorded in Matthew 10:23.

This word means that when the disciples are persecuted in one town they must flee to another town and continue the preaching of the gospel, and that the Son of Man will come before the gospel ministry toward Israel is finished.

"When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23).

The following meanings are contained here.

First, the disciples must not recklessly stay in one place of persecution but must move on to other regions and keep

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preaching the gospel. Persecution does not stop the preaching of the gospel; rather, it becomes an occasion for the gospel to spread to other regions.

Second, it means that the mission of preaching the gospel toward Israel is very urgent and continues until the Son of Man comes. The words *"will not have gone through the cities of Israel"* do not mean that the preaching of the gospel fails; they reveal that souls to be saved and places where the gospel must be preached still remain.

Third, the words *"before the Son of Man comes"* are generally understood as referring to the Second Coming and the judgment of Jesus. There are also interpretations that they refer to the appearing of Jesus' resurrection and power, or to the judgment of Jerusalem. The ultimate meaning of the context is that the disciples must look to the coming of the Son of Man and preach the gospel to the end even in persecution.

[Question] 18. In Matthew 10:24–25, what do the words about a disciple and his teacher, a servant and his master teach that the disciples must accept in their relationship with Jesus?

Jesus said that a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. He said it is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher and a servant like his master.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:24–25).

Since Jesus the Teacher received blame and persecution,

the disciples who follow Him cannot but receive the same blame and persecution. The disciples must not expect to have no hardship at all while following Jesus, but must accept it as natural to walk together the way Jesus walked.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 10:25, what do the words mean that if the master of the house was blamed as Beelzebub, how much more the people of his household?

In this word the master of the house refers to Jesus, and the people of his household refer to the disciples of Jesus.

"It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!" (Matthew 10:25).

Although Jesus cast out demons by the power of God, people blamed Him as one connected with Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. If so, the disciples who follow Jesus and preach the gospel can receive still harsher blame and insult.

This word, therefore, implies that the disciples must not think it strange even if they are misunderstood, blamed, and persecuted while preaching the gospel. Since Jesus the Teacher received such hardship, the disciples who follow Him must also be prepared for the same hardship.

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[Question] 20. In Matthew 10:26–28, what bold faith do the words demand of the disciples: that what is covered will be revealed and what is hidden will be known, and that they must not fear those who can kill only the body?

The disciples must not fear those who blame and persecute them and who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul.

"Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. 'Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:26–28).

The disciples must boldly preach the word they heard from Jesus, without fearing people's blame and persecution or the powers that threaten the life of the body. Man can only kill the body, but God can judge both body and soul, and so the One the disciples must truly fear is God.

[Question] 21. In Matthew 10:27, how did Jesus tell the disciples to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit when they preach it?

Jesus told the disciples not to hide the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit they had heard from Him, but to speak it openly in the light and to preach it on the housetops to all people.

"Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops" (Matthew 10:27).

This means that they must not conceal, out of fear of men, the word of the gospel they learned from Jesus in secret, but must preach it boldly and clearly so that anyone can hear it.

[Question] 22. In these days when the end of the world is near, who are the people God can be with and work through, and what gospel do they preach?

"The last days" must not be fixed as a particular date or event, but must be understood by the standard of watchfulness and gospel preaching that Jesus commanded. The characteristics of the people God is with and uses, as well as the gospel of the water and the Spirit they must preach, can also be discerned through the word of the Scriptures.

The people God is with and uses in the last days are not simply those who have much knowledge about the end, or those who have special abilities and large churches. They are, first of all, those who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit Jesus accomplished, and who, depending on the Holy Spirit, preach that gospel without corrupting it.

Only, man must not calculate and specify the day the Lord comes.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

What we need is not calculating dates but watching, believing, and preaching the gospel.

"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42).

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1. They are those who have received the remission of sins through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

A person must first believe with his own heart the gospel he preaches and receive the remission of sins. It is hard to preach the perfect remission of sins to others while sin remains as it is in one's own heart.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is as follows.

• Jesus fulfilled all righteousness by receiving baptism from John the Baptist.

• Through that baptism He received all the sins of the world passed on to Him.

• Bearing the sin of the world, He was judged and died on the Cross.

• By rising from the dead, He overcame sin and death.

• The Holy Spirit testifies that this fact of salvation is true.

• The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all sins and eternal life.

"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 –ASV" (1 John 5:6–7).

God uses not the person who preaches his own works and righteousness, but the person who believes and preaches the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

2. They are those who abide in Jesus and depend on the word

"Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4).

Knowing the gospel once does not mean that one can minister with his own wisdom and experience alone. He must continually abide in the word of Jesus, pray, and receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

"Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The person who works with God does not think that he himself is able. He acknowledges that the power and the fruit of the gospel all come from God.

The knowledge of the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not become a reason for pride. Rather, one must humble oneself with thanksgiving for the grace that made a sinner like oneself know the perfect gospel and entrusted it to him.

3. They are those who do not corrupt the gospel

In the last days people may want to hear only what they wish to hear.

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3–4).

If, to win people's favor, one leaves out sin and judgment, omits the baptism of Jesus, or mixes human works into salvation, the gospel becomes corrupted.

The Scriptures warn very sternly against another gospel.

"Which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7).

The person God uses does not change the content of the gospel to please people. He delivers as it is the word of the remission of sins completed with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus.

4. They are those who preach the word in season and out of season

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).

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The gospel evangelist is not a person who preaches the gospel only when people welcome it. Even when the hearers are few or there are opposition and difficulties, he preaches the word.

But boldness does not mean speaking roughly and aggressively. The passage says to preach with *"longsuffering and teaching."* The gospel must be preached clearly, yet explained with patience and love so that the other person can understand.

"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

5. They are those who watch, are sober, and live worthy of the gospel

To prepare for the last days is not merely to observe the events of the world. It is to examine one's own faith and life and live worthy of the word.

"Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

The fact that one has received the remission of sins is not a license to sin at will. Rather, because he knows the grace that Jesus took on all his sins, he comes to hate sin and to want to live following love and holiness.

"What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:11).

God does not use only those who are perfect and never make a mistake. But the person who does not acknowledge his faults and deliberately lives in sin and falsehood breaks down the credibility of the gospel. The person who is used turns back before the word when he has done wrong, and tries to bear fruits worthy of the gospel.

6. They are those who have compassion on the sheep without a shepherd

The person God uses must have a heart that pities the souls that have not received the remission of sins and are wandering.

The reason for preaching the gospel must not be only to make one's own church or organization large. Nor must it be to control people or gather money by using the fear of the end.

The reason God is longsuffering is that He wants to save people.

"Is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

The worker of the last days, therefore, must not concentrate only on threatening people, but must clearly preach how Jesus took on the sin of the world and completed salvation.

7. They are those who preach not themselves but the righteousness of Jesus

• The evangelist with whom God works does not speak centering on his own special abilities and experiences.

• He does not boast of revelations he has received.

• He does not put a particular leader or organization at the center of salvation.

• He does not make worldly success and material blessing the center of the gospel.

• He does not make man's prayers of repentance and good deeds the conditions of the remission of sins.

The center of what they preach is Jesus.

They preach the fact that Jesus took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of sin with the blood of the Cross, and gave eternal life by rising again. The Holy Spirit enlightens people's hearts through this word and makes them believe.

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8. They are those who preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations

Jesus spoke of the last days and the preaching of the gospel in connection with each other.

"This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14).

The central work the church of the last days must do is not calculating the date of the end or fitting all the events of the world into prophecy. It is testifying of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations.

The gospel of the kingdom is not a gospel that binds people in fear; it is the good news that lets people receive the remission of sins and eternal life by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished for sinners.

9. How is God's being with us revealed?

That God works together with us does not necessarily mean only great meetings, large numbers, and amazing miracles.

The work of God can appear as follows.

• The gospel is delivered accurately.

• Sinners believe in the righteousness of Jesus and receive the remission of sins.

• Those pressed down by condemnation obtain peace through the word.

• The born-again live a new life.

• The church is built up in the truth.

• New workers who will preach the gospel are raised up.

• All the glory returns not to man but to God.

"They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20).

The center is not that a person becomes famous, but that the Lord confirms the word.

Conclusion

The people God is with and uses in the last days are as follows.

Those who have received the remission of all sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, those who abide in the word of Jesus and depend on the Holy Spirit, those who preach the gospel accurately without mixing in human works, those who preach the word in season and out of season, those who watch and are sober and live lives worthy of the gospel, those who have compassion on the souls wandering in sin, those who do not boast of themselves or their church but preach only the righteousness of Jesus, and those who are faithful to preach the gospel of the kingdom to all nations

The gospel they preach is the gospel that Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to Him with His baptism, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and completed eternal redemption by rising from the dead, and that the person who believes this fact receives the remission of all sins and is born again of water and the Spirit.

The person who believes and preaches this gospel does not spend the last days in fear and date-calculating, but watches and prays, and becomes faithful to the work of delivering the word of the remission of sins to souls.

[Question] 23. In Matthew 10:28, who is the One the disciples of Jesus must truly fear?

The One we must truly fear is God, who is able to destroy

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both body and soul in hell.

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Man can only harm the life of the body and cannot judge the soul. But God has the authority to judge both the body and the soul of man, and so we must revere God rather than men and obey His word.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 10:29–31, why do the disciples of Jesus not need to fear even in persecution?

The reason we need not fear is that God knows us minutely and protects us, and considers us more valuable than many sparrows.

"Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29–31).

God rules even over one small sparrow and knows even all the hairs of our head. Therefore the disciples whom God considers precious and cares for must not fear people's persecution or hardship but believe in God.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 10:32–33, how did Jesus say He will treat, before God the Father, those who confess Him and those who deny Him?

The blessing for the one who confesses Jesus: Jesus will also confess that person before God the Father in heaven.

The punishment for the one who denies Jesus: Jesus will also deny that person before God the Father.

"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32–33).

To confess Jesus means to believe in Jesus as one's own Savior and confess Him openly even when there are people's blame and persecution. Conversely, the word means that if a person denies Jesus for fear of men, Jesus will not acknowledge that person at the last judgment.

[Question] 26. In Matthew 10:34, what did Jesus say He came to bring to the world?

Jesus said that He came to bring not peace but a sword to this earth.

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

The *"sword"* here does not mean an actual weapon or violence; it means the division and conflict that arise between people because of Jesus and the gospel. Because some believe in and follow Jesus while others reject Him, conflict can arise even between family members. Jesus, therefore, told them in advance that when they believe and follow the gospel, people's

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opposition and difficulties in relationships can arise.

[Question] 27. In Matthew 10:35–36, what conflicts can arise between family members because of Jesus Christ?

Because of Jesus Christ, discord and opposition arise between family members, and it can even happen that the members of one's own household become his enemies.

"For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'" (Matthew 10:35–36).

This does not mean that Jesus came to destroy the home. It means that because some in a family believe in and follow Jesus and the gospel while others reject and oppose them, conflict and persecution can arise even between the closest family members. Jesus said that the disciples must keep their faith even in such difficulties.

[Question] 28. In Matthew 10:37–38, what kind of person is not worthy of Jesus?

Jesus said that the following people are not worthy of Him.

The person who loves father or mother more than Jesus, the person who loves son or daughter more than Jesus, and the person who does not take his cross and follow Jesus

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and

follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37–38).

This does not mean not to love one's family; it means that we must love Jesus first, above any object including our family. It also means that the person who does not accept the sacrifice and suffering that come with following Jesus is not worthy of the way of a true disciple.

[Question] 29. In Matthew 10:39, what does the word *"he who loses his life for My sake will find it"* teach is the way to obtain true life?

The secret of obtaining true life is losing one's own life for Jesus.

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

This does not mean to harm the life of one's own flesh. It means that the person who abandons Jesus to keep only his own life and profit in the end loses eternal life, but the person who sacrifices himself for Jesus and the gospel and keeps his faith to the end obtains eternal life. True life, therefore, lies not in living centered on oneself but in believing in Jesus and following Him.

[Question] 30. In Matthew 10:40–42, what reward does the person receive who receives and serves the disciples who preach this truth, believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit?

Jesus said that receiving a disciple who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit is receiving Jesus Himself, and that

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receiving Jesus is receiving God the Father who sent Him.

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:40–42).

To receive a gospel evangelist does not mean merely providing him food or lodging. It means acknowledging him as a worker of the gospel sent by God, accepting the gospel of the water and the Spirit he preaches as the word of God, and joining in that gospel ministry with heart, material things, and labor.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit the disciples preach is the truth that Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and then rose from the dead, thereby saving sinners completely. The person who believes and accepts this gospel receives the remission of all sins, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, becomes God's righteous person, and obtains eternal life. This is the most fundamental blessing the person who receives the gospel receives.

"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:41).

The *"little ones"* here refer to the disciples who, though not high or famous in the world, believe in and follow Jesus and preach the gospel. God does not forget even the small act of

service of offering a cup of cold water to such a disciple. If that service does not stop at human kindness that pities the disciple, but is done believing the fact that he is the Lord's disciple and a person who preaches the gospel, God accepts it as done to the Lord and surely repays it.

Therefore, the person who receives and serves the disciples who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit not only obtains the remission of sins and eternal life by believing the gospel, but also, as one who has participated in the ministry of the gospel evangelists, receives a prophet's reward and a righteous man's reward and does not lose even the reward for a small act of service. However, such service does not become a merit that buys salvation. Salvation is received freely by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receiving the disciples and serving the ministry of the gospel is a fruit that comes from saved faith, for which one receives a reward from God. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord has given the power He gave the twelve disciples to us who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

< Matthew 10:1-8 >

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."

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Today's passage records the scene in which Jesus calls His twelve disciples, raises them up, and entrusts the ministry to them. Jesus called His twelve disciples and gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. The Lord gave the twelve disciples this power, and I believe that He has given this power to us as well.

The power the Lord gave the twelve disciples

Looking at the passage, it says that the Lord gave the twelve disciples the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. And then, in verses 5 and 6, He speaks like this: *"These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* The Lord said this as He gave the twelve disciples the power to cast out demons and heal diseases and commanded them to heal people.

He told them not to go into the way of the Gentiles. The Gentiles are those who do not believe in God and serve idols. He also told them not to enter a city of the Samaritans. The Samaritans were a mixed people. The surrounding nations invaded from time to time, carrying off the people of the border regions and pitching their camps there, and so the people of that place came to be mixed with the Gentiles. They were no longer pure Jews but had become a mixed people who had borne children mingled with the Gentiles. That is why He told them not to go that way either. Why would that be? He told them not to go because they had become people who served Gentile gods.

To preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to mixed

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people is truly hard. Even today, people who firmly believe man-made creeds to be orthodox faith are very hard to turn from that thinking. The diseases those people suffer from are truly many. First, they are demon-possessed. Second, while saying they believe in Jesus, they live just like the people of the world. They do not do the things that follow the word of God. So preaching the gospel to these people is very difficult.

That is why Jesus said to go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was telling them to go to those who seek and seek God. It would be no use going and speaking to a mixed people, or to those who believe man-made creeds to be orthodox faith. So He told them not to go to them but to go to the lost of Israel, and He told them several works to do.

The true meaning of healing the sick

If we look at Matthew 10:7–8, He speaks like this: *"And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."* In this word He said to heal the sick. Jesus actually healed many sick people.

But when Jesus healed the sick, they did not rejoice only because they had been healed of their diseases. They rejoiced because they came to know who Jesus is. Once a person has merely been healed of a disease, that is the end of it. He goes right back to his old way. The person who has only had his physical disease healed gains no particular benefit.

The Lord gave the twelve disciples the power to heal diseases and cast out demons, and He has given it to us as well. Looking at you and me, people have far more mental diseases—diseases of the heart—than diseases of the body. There are truly many

people who suffer, sick spiritually and mentally.

When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we see that every person is sunk in something. Some are sunk in human relationships, and some are sunk in words they have picked up from religion. Others are sunk in the words of philosophers, and in the words of those the world calls wise. We must heal that. We must let them know that it is wrong.

Among you also there are many who have received the remission of sins and yet have a disease in their hearts. There are those who grew up unhappily as children. If someone grew up without receiving his parents' love, suffering unreasonable things, being beaten, being pressed down, and not being treated properly, that too is a disease. The body has grown up, but the heart has become unable to trust people.

One brother had a very hard time growing up because of his parents. He had done nothing except inherit his parents' blood, yet his family would oppress him, saying, "You are like that because you take after your father; you are like that because you take after your mother." They do so because those parents left an evil influence on the family and departed.

If people keep driving someone that way over what he has not done, a wronged heart and a resentful heart arise in him. A person who has grown up that way, even after he is grown, takes even a small word from someone as, "This person is just the same; it seems he hates only me." The human heart has feelings, and we ought to consider one another's feelings, but that is what failed to happen.

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The door of the heart opens only when we receive the other's feelings

The human mind is made up of three things: intellect, emotion, and will—that is, knowing, feeling, and doing. A person who was much pressed down emotionally in childhood feels, even when he is older, that the other person is pressing him down in his relationships. He considers that the other fails to understand him and presses him down. Though he has done nothing wrong, he feels that the other person keeps hating him and pressing down on him. Then a distrusting heart arises. He becomes distrustful, thinking, "He is just like the person I went through long ago." When that happens, however sincerely the other person speaks for his good, he flatly rejects it emotionally. Once that rejecting heart arises, there is simply nothing to be done.

For example, children clashing with their parents is also usually a matter of feelings. Children quarrel at the drop of a hat even while playing together. They quarrel over toys, quarrel over food, and quarrel over school supplies. If at that moment the parent comes over and only scolds, "You are the older brother—why do you act like this?" the older brother protests, "Isn't it because my younger brother keeps trying to take what is mine, saying it is his?"

If the parent enters the middle of the quarrel like this and only plays the judge, no exchange of feelings takes place with the children. The children themselves know quite well who did well and who did wrong. At such times, instead of only judging, we ought to ask, "Why did you do that?" Then the child says, "This is mine, but my younger brother kept trying to take it, so my feelings were hurt and I acted that way." Then we need only receive that feeling: "So your feelings were hurt." To the

younger brother as well, we need only receive his heart: "You wanted to play with your brother's things together, but he would not give you even one, so you were upset."

After receiving their feelings like that, we need only tell them, "But quarreling with each other is not good, so would it not be better to get along?" We lead the older brother to let his younger brother play together with him, and the younger brother not to try to snatch his brother's things one-sidedly but to play with them together. When we receive a child's feelings like this from time to time, the child's heart does not die. But if we only weigh rights and wrongs one-sidedly and scold, no exchange of feelings takes place.

People must know one another intellectually, but their feelings must also flow between them. Whenever we ask anyone, "Why did you do that?" he tells us the wrong he has suffered. If at that moment we understand him even a little—"So that is what hurt your feelings"—the door of the heart does not close, and the door of feeling does not close. But we usually try only to judge. We simply pass the verdict, "As the older brother, this was your fault; and as the younger brother, this was your fault," and end with, "Do not fight again." If we do that, the exchange of feelings is cut off, and the child ends up severed from his parents and severed from his friends.

So if a person goes through many such things in childhood as he grows up, even when he is older he keeps seeing things that way: "Is that person not looking at me strangely? Is he not trying to crush me?" Therefore, whatever anyone does, we ought to listen once to the reason. If we ask, "Why did you do that?" and hear out all the circumstances, we can receive him, saying, "So that is how you felt." If we hear the whole story, the other person's feelings are not hurt. When we receive a wounded heart, the exchange of feelings takes place.

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The work of correcting what has been learned wrongly

There are times when we hold stubbornly to what we have learned wrongly in the world and act as if we knew all about life. At such times we must tell the person why it is wrong: “It seems you think what you learned is the truth. Since that is all you know, you cannot help it. But not all of it is right.”

In the passage, the command to heal the sick is a word spoken about spiritual matters. If we, like Jesus, healed the physical diseases of everyone we met, this world would need no hospitals. But Jesus is the One who heals the diseases of our hearts, the diseases of our souls. In any case, it is the appointed order that man’s body is born once and dies once. However much we heal it, man is born, grows old, gets sick, and dies.

Therefore we must heal the heart. After receiving the person’s heart—“So that is how it was”—we must heal the disease of the heart. A person may tell us his own kind of logic, but that is talking philosophy, and he is believing as truth what religious leaders have told him. But when we look into it, it is in fact wrong.

For example, some people teach that when a person grows old, his heart changes, his sinning lessens, and he changes altogether. But that is a wrong statement. People do not change like that by themselves as they age. Rather, when the body is not well, they grow more irritable and more fretful, and there are many times when they cannot judge wisely. It is because their bodies are weary. To speak as if one automatically attains release just by growing old does not accord with reason. Man is rather better when he is young, and sins all the more as he grows older. Yet some people say the opposite and have made it into a doctrine.

When people who attended churches that believe only in the Cross come into God's Church, there is truly much to correct, because they live by the standard they learned. Whenever such things appear, we must heal that spiritual disease, saying, "It seems you learned it that way when you were young. It seems you think it is right." If we first receive the feelings of his heart—"So that is how it was with you"—and then teach him the facts and lead him, he slowly changes and is healed.

We have big diseases, but how many small diseases we have as well! The small diseases are truly many. People insist only on what they know and what they have experienced. But we must live learning. We must also listen to the other person's story, and we must have an attitude that wants to learn. Instead of only judging, "That person is saying something to me again," we must listen to what he says. When we listen to how his heart is, his feelings come through. If it is not that the person hates me, then we must try to learn, thinking, "Ah, it seems I knew it wrongly." If we only have that heart, we can be healed to any extent, and we can also grow spiritually to any extent.

A person who was rebuked and despised by people in his childhood, even after coming into the church, often does not exchange well with those who go before him. He sees those who go before him only as people who judge him. But that is not judging; it is trying to correct him and help him.

Again, some people try to lash out as soon as they meet another person. At such times we must help them quiet their hearts and calm down. If we advise, "You are too angry right now; if you handle it in that state, the matter will go wrong. Calm your heart and let us talk quietly," misunderstandings are cleared and reconciliation often comes quickly.

Also, when we ourselves are too angry, it is not good to explode on the spot. If we do, we must regret it and apologize

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later. If it seems we cannot govern our temper and will do great wrong, we should rather avoid the situation—either I leave that place, or I ask the other person to step out for a moment.

Even though we are born again, we have much that must be healed. When we are placed in a situation we simply cannot bear as human beings, a situation in which we truly cannot help getting angry, we need to think, "I am like this, but what would Jesus have done when He met such a person?" The Lord would have waited a little longer. The other person acts so because he does not know; so we wait again, thinking, "Though I am wronged, the Lord also waits, so should I not wait too?" We too have much that must be healed. Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sins does not mean everything is done. Being saved does not mean everything is now finished. We must know that we still have much to learn and much to be healed of.

We must look to the Lord who has removed our sins

"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead" (Matthew 10:8), He said. Everyone, do we not raise the dead? We bring to life those who are dying because of sin. We also cleanse the lepers. We sin daily. We do not sin on purpose, but just as leprosy keeps oozing, such weakness remains in us even after we have received the remission of sins.

At every such time we must look to the Lord who has removed our sins. We must look to Jesus taking on our sins once and for all by receiving baptism from John. We must also look to Him being nailed to the Cross, shedding His blood and dying to receive the judgment of our sins in our place, and rising again

on the third day. Whenever we look to this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we are healed. The Lord gave His disciples the power to do these things for people. He gave them wisdom and understanding.

So the Lord brought the church into being, made disciples and raised them, and entrusted the work to them. We have many kinds of work. Try counseling a person. When we understand him—"So that is how your heart was"—and counsel him and correct him, people listen. It is because there is realization. And so they grow spiritually and in character. That is exactly the work the Lord told us to do.

The power to stand against demons

If there is someone who is demon-possessed and rushes at us recklessly, we must drive him back, saying, "Away with you, Satan!" A demon is not an opponent to be indulged. The Scriptures say to resist the devil and he will flee from you. We must resist in the name of Jesus. Demons do not retreat just because we shout. We must resist clearly from the heart.

If other people are present and it is hard to speak with our lips, we can resist with the heart, looking into his eyes: "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you: away with you, Satan!" If we do so, even a demon-possessed person can do nothing; he drops his eyes and flees. That is what we must do. That is exactly what the Lord was telling us. Jesus called the twelve disciples and entrusted this work to them, to have them cast out unclean spirits and heal all kinds of sickness and disease. The disciples did these works while they lived on this earth, and then went to be before the Lord. Today's word is exactly that word.

I am doing that work, and you also are doing that work.

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When a person went through many bad home circumstances as a child, it is truly hard to draw out that wound and heal it. In the worship service as well, reading the word and preaching it is not performing a miracle of divine healing or speaking in tongues in that hour. When the word is delivered clearly and a person comes to understand it, many diseases are healed. This is what God's Church can do. Places that are not God's Church cannot do it.

The healing of the heart received only in God's Church

Once I saw a sister give her testimony on a Christian broadcast. She was a sister who had gone out to a foreign mission field with her husband. They had gone to a certain region to preach the gospel, and on his way back from finishing his ministry, her husband died in a car accident. She had little children of three and two, and her husband had died—how hard must that sister's heart have been?

Yet that sister said that she was still living a missionary's life, pressing down that pain again and again. As she testified before the church congregation about the things she had gone through in her mission work, something kept surging up inside her even while she spoke, and she said she simply could not understand God. Even so, she showed that she was enduring, bearing it patiently, and ministering for the gospel. How many wounds must there be in that sister's heart, and how many diseases of the heart?

When we come to God's Church, we first receive the remission of sins, and second, we are healed of the weak diseases of the heart. That missionary sister was a person of truly strong

will. But however strong one's will, a wound of the heart is still a wound. Holding wounds in and only enduring like that, a person falls ill in mind and finally even becomes demon-possessed. Seeing her, I felt truly sorry. If she met God's Church she could receive the healing of her heart as well, but in such churches they rather say that a person who endures like that has good faith.

But that is not good faith; she is a patient who must be healed of a disease of the heart. Jesus does not want that. The Lord does not want us to hold out by willpower alone, enduring blindly. The Lord wants us to be healed.

Therefore, since it is so with me and with you as well, we must think over whether there is such a disease in our hearts, a disease not yet healed, and receive healing for such things from those who go before us. When we look at another person too, we should take it as a premise—"That brother, that sister grew up in such circumstances, so he may well be like that"—and listen to him, and yet also teach him and lead him. But if the other person comes to distrust those who go before him, he does not listen. If he does not listen, the loss is his alone, so he must listen. He must take it in, thinking, "These are words for my sake; these are words to lead me rightly; he says this to make me grow; he says this because he has something to teach me." If he receives it thinking, "This is a person who only nags at me and bothers me, a person who only judges me," it profits nothing. We must become counselors to one another. Even among peers it must be so, and yet this is something that is not easily corrected.

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Only when we receive the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are our diseases also healed

We must first receive the remission of sins before diseases can be healed. Without receiving the remission of sins, even leprosy cannot be healed. Just as a leper keeps oozing, man sins until the day he dies. That disease, too, is healed by looking to the Lord, by faith, because the Lord has already removed our sins by receiving baptism from John and taking on the sin of the world. Leprosy is not healed all by itself.

The person who has received the remission of sins can be healed within the church. And so he keeps growing.

The Lord worked in us that way, and He told us to do the same as well. Look well to yourselves in faith as you live. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The worker who freely delivers the gospel he has freely received

< Matthew 10:1-15 >

"And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. 'Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your

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peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!"

Matthew chapter 10 is the word in which Jesus calls His twelve disciples and sends them out into the world. At the end of Matthew chapter 9, the Lord saw the multitudes struggling and wandering like sheep without a shepherd and was moved with compassion on them. And He said that the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few, and told them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers. In Matthew chapter 10 that follows, the Lord called those very disciples, gave them power, and sent them out. The very people who had prayed for laborers to be sent were called by the Lord and went out into the actual field of the harvest.

Those who have received the remission of sins today by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit are also people called by the Lord. Not every believer holds the same office, but everyone who is saved has been called to serve the gospel in his own place. Some preach the word, some make literature, some help the mission with prayer and material things, and some look after newly arrived souls. All these works are one gospel ministry to have lost souls receive the remission of sins and enter the kingdom of God.

The Lord who first calls and gives power

Before Jesus sent the twelve disciples into the world, He first

called them. And He gave them the power to cast out unclean spirits and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. It was not that the disciples prepared ability by themselves and then came to the Lord. The Lord called them, entrusted them, and gave them the ability they needed. The work of the gospel always begins from the Lord's calling and supply.

In the power to heal diseases and cast out demons given to the twelve apostles at that time, there was a special sign of their apostleship. We cannot insist that every gospel evangelist today must perform miracles in the same manner. But the gospel Jesus gave still has the power to heal hearts sick with sin, to bring the spiritually dead to life, and to deliver people out of the authority of darkness. Just as the signs of healing the diseases of the body revealed Jesus' saving power, so today the gospel of the water and the Spirit gives actual salvation to the souls under sin and death.

Twelve men who differed from one another

Looking at the names of the twelve apostles, we can see that they differed from one another in background and character. There were men who had been fishermen, there was Matthew the tax collector, and there was Simon the Cananite. It was not a gathering only of people with high learning and power in the world. The Lord called ordinary and insufficient people, taught them the word, and used them as workers of the gospel.

But among the twelve there was also Judas Iscariot. He went about with the disciples, heard the word, and saw the miracles, but he did not believe in Jesus as his own Savior in his heart. The fact that he saw the Lord up close did not save him. Being in the church and outwardly joining in the work of the gospel does not mean one is automatically saved. Each person must believe with

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his own heart the fact that Jesus completely removed his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross.

The gospel that seeks the lost sheep

Jesus told the disciples to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel before the way of the Gentiles or a city of the Samaritans. This does not mean that the gospel was to be preached to Israel alone forever. After His resurrection the Lord commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations. Here He was speaking of the first stage of gospel preaching and of the concrete order He entrusted to the disciples at that time.

Today too there are many lost sheep. There are people who believe in Jesus and attend church and yet confess that there is still sin in their hearts. Taught that their original sin was remitted but that the personal sins they commit daily must be washed away with prayers of repentance, they live as sinners all their lives. They earnestly want the remission of sins but do not know where they should hear the complete gospel. Such people are exactly the lost sheep who must hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The worker of the gospel must not judge people only by their appearance and present reaction. Some seem at first to reject the word, but deep in their hearts they are seeking the truth. Conversely, some seem to have much religious interest and yet do not abandon their own righteousness. We must ask God for wisdom and seek out the souls that long for the gospel. We must not give up at once because we preached once and there was no response, but pray, till the field of that heart, and deliver the word at the fitting time.

The kingdom of God that has drawn near

The Lord told the disciples to preach as they went, *"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."* That the kingdom of God has drawn near does not mean only that the date of the world's end has drawn near. It means that Jesus Christ the King has come, and that the way of salvation has been opened for sinners to come under God's reign and become the people of the kingdom of God.

A person who has sin cannot enter the kingdom of God. However long he has led a religious life and however many good deeds he has done, if sin remains in his heart he cannot live together with the holy God. That is why Jesus said, *"Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5)*. To enter the kingdom of God, we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of all sins, and be born again into new life.

What we must preach is also this clear gospel of the kingdom. We must not preach only ways to succeed in the world and improve one's circumstances. Nor must we stop at saying that believing in Jesus makes one's character better. We must preach accurately through the Scriptures how a sinner receives the remission of all his sins and enters the kingdom of God.

The salvation completed with the water and the Spirit

At the center of the gospel of the kingdom is the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. Jesus is the Son of God, the One who is without sin. He came to this earth in the flesh in order to take on Himself all the sins of sinners, to be

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judged, and so to save them.

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was the righteous work by which the sinless Lord received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body. The Lord said, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15).* By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He took on the sins of all the people of the world once and for all.

So John the Baptist testified of Jesus, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)* Jesus carried the sin of the world He had taken on with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and went to the Cross. By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He received in our place the judgment of sin we ought to have received, and on the third day He rose again from the dead.

This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The water refers to the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, and the blood refers to the judgment of sin He received on the Cross. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and that this work of salvation is the truth. The Scriptures say, *"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 –ASV" (1 John 5:6).*

The worker of the gospel must know this content clearly and preach it. If we speak only of the blood of the Cross and cannot explain when and how Jesus took on the sin of the world, the sinner cannot know where his sins were actually transferred. We must preach the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection as one complete salvation. When a person believes this word, the lost sheep receives the remission of sins and becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God.

The ministry that heals souls and brings them to life

Jesus told the disciples to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. This command appeared as actual miracles in the disciples' ministry at that time. At the same time, these works clearly reveal the spiritual picture of the gospel ministry that saves sinners.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit heals such souls. It heals the disease of guilt by making people believe the word that Jesus took on all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. It brings dead souls to life by making them believe the gospel of the Cross and the resurrection. It makes people discern their own sin and the righteousness of God, and makes them escape from false teachings and follow the truth.

Therefore the work of preaching the gospel is the most precious work of life in this world. Giving a person material help is also necessary, but if that soul dies without receiving the remission of sins, it cannot escape eternal judgment. The worker of the gospel, even while caring for people's physical circumstances, must first of all deliver to their hearts the gospel of the perfect remission of sins.

The grace freely received

The Lord said, *"Freely you have received, freely give."* The disciples did not obtain the Lord's calling, power, and salvation by their own merit. They received them by grace, without paying any price. It is the same with us. Jesus removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, and we received the remission of sins by believing that fact.

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The word to give freely means not to exchange the truth of the gospel for money. We must not preach the gospel and use people's remission of sins as a pretext for gaining profit or building our own fame. God's salvation cannot be made into a human commodity. The worker of the gospel must regard the very fact that one soul is saved as his joy and his reward.

But the word to give freely does not mean that no material things are needed for the ministry of the gospel. Making literature, sending out missionaries, establishing churches, and caring for souls require much labor and material means. The saved believers serve that work together with thanksgiving. The price of the gospel cannot be received, but the labor of delivering the gospel needs the devotion of the whole church.

The faith that depends on the Lord rather than on preparation

Jesus told the disciples to provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in their money belts, and to take neither bag for the journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs. We must not understand this word only as a rule that every evangelist of every age must make no travel preparations at all. The Lord was teaching the disciples the faith that God supplies what is needed for the ministry of the gospel.

The Lord said, *"A worker is worthy of his food."* God who sends the workers of the gospel supplies what they need through worthy people. The worker must not work with material things as his aim, but the church and the believers must fittingly care for the worker who labors for the gospel. The one who sends and the one who goes participate together in God's ministry.

This word lightens the worker's heart. If he thinks all the

responsibility rests on his shoulders alone, he is pressed down with fear and anxiety. But the Owner of this ministry is God. God opens the way, joins the needed coworkers to us, and gives food in due season. The worker must do the work entrusted to him faithfully, but leave the results and the supply to the Lord.

The heart that stays in one place and serves

Jesus said that whatever city or town they entered, they were to find out who in it was worthy and stay there until they left. The meaning is contained here that they were not to move from this house to that house in search of more comfortable and better treatment. The worker of the gospel must not be a person who moves according to his own convenience, but a person who stays in order to serve the souls entrusted to him.

It takes time for one soul to be saved and for its faith to grow. Preaching the gospel once does not end all responsibility. We must see whether he has understood the word accurately, and after he receives the remission of sins we must connect him with the church and keep bringing him up. When new questions and difficulties arise, we must search the word and pray together with him.

Church planting and mission work are carried out on the same principle. If we easily move on because visible fruit does not appear quickly, we cannot put down roots. If it is a place God has entrusted to us, we must be patient, teach the word, and share our lives with the people. A worker's faithfulness appears not in splendid results but in keeping one place and bearing the work entrusted to him.

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The person who delivers peace

The Lord told the disciples to wish a house peace as they entered it. The most precious gift the worker of the gospel carries is not a promise of worldly success but the gospel of peace that reconciles us with God. The person who has sin is in the state of being God's enemy, and so there is no true peace deep in his heart. When he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sins, he is reconciled with God and obtains true peace.

This peace does not mean that one's circumstances are always smooth. It is the peace that comes from the faith that all our sins have disappeared and God has become our Father, even in tribulation and hardship. Upon the house that receives the gospel this peace comes. When one member of a family first receives the remission of sins and stands on the word, the way of salvation opens to the other members of the household through his life and testimony.

When we preach the gospel, we must not make winning an argument our goal. We must deliver the truth clearly, yet with a gentle heart. Emotional words meant to subdue the other person can close the door of his heart. We must pray that God will pity that soul and let him receive the word, and approach him as a person of peace.

The responsibility for rejecting the gospel

Jesus told the disciples to shake off the dust from their feet toward those who would not receive them or hear their words. And He said that on the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city. Rejecting

the gospel is not simply declining the opinion of one religious person. It is rejecting the word of salvation God has sent.

Before judging sinners, God opened a full way of salvation. He sent His Son; Jesus settled all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross; and He sent the workers of the gospel to have this fact delivered. If, even so, a person holds on to his own righteousness and stubbornness and rejects the gospel, the responsibility lies with himself.

But we must not use this word as an excuse to give up on people too quickly. We must wisely discern whether a person opposed the gospel without understanding it accurately, or rejected it stubbornly even though he understood. We ourselves may not have accepted the gospel immediately when we first heard it. Seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit, we must discern when to preach, when to wait, and when to leave.

The worker's life that begins after being saved

The remission of sins is not the end of the life of faith but the beginning of a new life. Jesus did not save us from sin so that we would live comfortably by ourselves in this world and then come to the kingdom of God. He wants to save yet other souls through the saved. After calling His disciples, the Lord did not keep them only at His side but sent them into the world.

Living a worker's life does not mean that everyone becomes a pastor or a missionary to a distant country. We can testify of the gospel at home, at work, and at school. We can share gospel booklets, deliver the word through the internet, help the church's literature ministry and mission, and lead souls we would evangelize to the meetings. Looking after sick believers, fellowshipping with the newly saved, and praying in unseen

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places are also works of the gospel.

We were originally people sick and dead in sin. But Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and rose again. By believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit we received the remission of sins without paying any price. Now the Lord says to us: freely give this gospel you have freely received, seek out the lost sheep, and deliver the peace of the kingdom of God.

Even if our ability is lacking, we must believe in the Lord who sends us. The Lord opens the way, supplies what is needed, and brings souls to life through the word. We need only serve the gospel faithfully, each in his own place. Knowing that for one soul to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins is more precious than any achievement of this world, we must become workers of faith who offer the rest of our lives to this work of the gospel. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

For the preaching of the gospel

< Matthew 10:16-23 >

"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. 'Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes."

The weather has grown hot, and physically it is hard. But my heart is glad because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is being spread widely. Above all, I give thanks because the Lord has worked in the work we labored at with all our strength and has let us reap much fruit. Seeing the Lord's will being accomplished like this, I give glory to God.

I want to make good books for our family members here at home. These days the inflammation in my eyes is severe and my

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eyesight has failed considerably, but my heart's desire is to leave behind for you what I should leave before my body is worn any further.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit revealed in the Tabernacle

I am truly thankful that the translated book has come out. All the other words are important as well, but there are the four colors that appeared on the gate of the Tabernacle. With four colors—blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen—the Lord revealed Himself to us.

The blue, purple, and scarlet thread clearly testify that the Lord saved us with the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit and made us righteous. That is, it is the gospel of the water and the Spirit: Jesus received baptism from John and bore all the sins of the world, was judged and died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again on the third day, accomplishing our salvation.

The gate of the Tabernacle and its pillars, the acacia wood, the altar of burnt offering and the laver, the priests, and each one of the various materials reveal Jesus Christ. We were those who deserved to die because of our sins.

When the pillars of the Tabernacle were set up, the bases underneath were sockets of bronze, the tops of the pillars were overlaid with silver, and hooks were made, cords were connected, and pegs were driven into the ground to set them up firmly. All these materials are Jesus Christ.

That we have received the remission of sins and become a part of God's temple is because Jesus Christ, who became the material that went into the Tabernacle, saved us in this way. The Tabernacle teaches us exactly this truth.

The Lord who sends His disciples out to preach the gospel

In today's passage, in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus sends His twelve disciples out to preach the gospel. He told them not to go to the Gentiles, nor to enter a city of the Samaritans, but rather to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

He sends out the twelve disciples, telling them to preach as they go that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons, and, since they have freely received, to freely give.

And the first word He speaks is from verse 16 to verse 18: *"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles."*

The Lord speaks this word as He sends His own disciples out into the world. He says that His sending them is like sending sheep into the midst of wolves. It is like sending sheep among wolves, He says—like sending them out to be killed.

Therefore He tells them to be wise as serpents and pure as doves. The serpent is wise and deceives people well. The dove represents purity. When they go out to preach the gospel, people persecute them, and they even seize the disciples of Jesus and kill them. So the Lord gave them this word as He sent them out to the place of preaching the gospel.

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Do not worry; the Holy Spirit will speak

These days such things are rare, but in the old days it was so. If people believed in Jesus, they were seized, tortured, and even killed, or tried and thrown into prison. So the Lord speaks like this.

"But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matthew 10:19–20) It means that the Holy Spirit will speak for you what you are to say. The Lord tells those who preach the gospel in advance even all the things they will suffer.

He says: *"Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death" (Matthew 10:21)* And then He says: *"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22).*

As the Lord spoke such words while sending out the twelve disciples, the disciples' hearts, too, must have been heavy as they heard them. Then the Lord said: *"When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes" (Matthew 10:23).*

Now is a good time to preach the gospel

Thinking back on those times, it was truly so. But what about now? Now good times have come. No one seizes and kills us for preaching the gospel.

Moreover, because we preach the gospel through literature,

we do not suffer such things. In front of the headquarters buildings of mission organizations there often stand memorial stones. They are stones commemorating those who were sent out as missionaries and were killed. There is hardly a mission organization that has not had its people killed.

But we preach the gospel through booklets, so such things do not happen. I truly like the work of preaching through booklets. For I myself read the Bible through a booklet I received on the street, and I read a booklet I received when I went to reserve army training. That is why I like preaching the gospel through booklets.

The benefits of preaching the gospel through literature

When I preach, I look at the congregation and take stock of the situation. I consider how long this person has led the life of faith, and whether he will understand this sermon when he hears it. If it seems hard for him to understand, I unfold it in detail. I look at how much of the word those sitting there have heard and whether they know the whole gospel, and preach to fit the situation. So even though it is all in the text, I cannot always preach it in detail.

But literature is not so. We can write in detail and supplement it, and we can take out all the words spoken in jest among ourselves. That is why I think literature mission is good.

Making literature is truly hard. When one volume is finished, there are times when it is so painful that I do not even want to think of it again. The content is good, but the work is very hard. Even so, for you here at home, I intend to make literature that is not heavy—literature that reads lightly and yet leaves a great

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echo in the heart. I am making the Psalms that way now, and I intend to set my hand to Leviticus and Acts as well.

Volume 1 of the book on the Tabernacle has come out, so I intend to finish volumes 2 and 3 as well. I plan to combine the two into one volume and finish the Tabernacle in two volumes. When people read this word of the Tabernacle, they will come to know that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word of salvation with a firm foundation; so I am expectant and thankful.

Let us look to the last days and live today well

We are preaching the gospel now, but in the last days these things will happen. We who were saved long ago must also know this fact. Even the righteous will suffer these things when the Antichrist appears at the end. The Lord spoke of that part in advance.

As for what we will suffer then, I intend to suffer it then; for now I intend to devote all my strength to the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And I intend to live each day well. If there is anyone in the church who has not yet been saved, I think of him and preach the gospel. In any case this world will all collapse; so I hope we will not set our lingering affections on a world that will perish, but live each day well until we meet the Lord.

My body—my eyes and ears—has grown much weaker. But before it is worn any further, I want to leave behind what I should leave for you. You will live longer than I, and you will have to live making use of the various facilities here. In the last days it is hard if we do not have what is our own. Therefore, whatever may happen tomorrow, we must live well up to today. That is why we prepare in advance.

In days past I was so poor that there were many times when it was hard to scrape together a meal. I know well how miserable it is not to be able to eat. So the purpose I have set is this: that we serve the gospel with what we earn by our labor, and that we also eat well and live well. When I met the Lord, I said this to Him: I vowed that I would preach to the whole world this gospel of the water and the Spirit—that the Lord received baptism from John and bore the sin of the world, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose again, and so saved us.

Our hope is only in the Lord

These days I hear that the gospel is being spread widely, and it is truly good. Looking at the mission news, eighty thousand, ninety thousand people come in. Many receive the e-books, and the combined volumes and the audio also go out in great numbers. The Germans have received many combined volumes, the Taiwanese have received many as well, and people also take those in Korean and in other languages.

It is truly good that they receive them like this. Hope arises: now that the books have been translated well, people certainly do receive many of them. In the old days, even when many came in, they did not receive so many. Our hope is in none other than our Lord.

This summer is so hot; if God permits, I hope we can prepare even a small place to play in the water beside the workplace, so that we may get a little rest amid our labor. I will close the message here today. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Those who lead a life of faith must serve God first

< Matthew 10:34-42 >

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.' He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. 'He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

"I did not come to bring peace but a sword"

The Lord did not come to bring peace to the world. Rather, He came to bring a sword. The Lord said that He came to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a

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daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And He said that a man would come to fight with the members of his own household. How is it that a man's enemies become those of his own household? It is because the members of a household love one another so much and are bound together by flesh and blood. Because of that affection, they can refuse the will of God and can even come to stand against God. Therefore the person who leads a life of faith must put God first above all. The Lord is speaking exactly this truth.

This word applies to us practically. If we love our own family, our own household, more than God, we cannot follow the Lord. In whatever we do as we live, we must think first of the will of God. After that we must think of the harmony of the home. If we put the harmony of the home first, we cannot follow the will of God. But if we think first of the will of God, we can achieve the harmony of the home as well. Though there may be strife at first, later things rather turn out well.

Therefore someone must play the role of a pioneer. Someone must lead his family into the right way. Otherwise that family ends in total ruin. If the one who goes before does not follow the will of God, he ruins himself and brings his whole family to ruin as well.

Take up your own cross and follow the Lord

Therefore the Lord said to take up one's own cross and follow Him. It means to follow the Lord carrying one's own difficulties, bearing one's own pain. Every one of us has difficulties. Where is there a person without difficulties? But we follow the Lord even in those difficulties. We must follow the Lord's will first, and first set His heart at ease. Then the Lord

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blesses our lives.

In the life of faith, God always comes first. When God's will is accomplished first, God then fulfills as a blessing what we desire. Otherwise we cannot follow the Lord. If we try to accomplish our own will first, we rather come to stand against the Lord, and the Lord ends up becoming our enemy.

If a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies

The Lord spoke of Himself as a grain of wheat. *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24)* Only when a grain of wheat falls into the ground, dies, and rots does it bear much fruit. Only when we sacrifice first can we then reap much fruit.

This is the truth. Truth is not something only to be known with the head. It must melt practically into our lives. To follow God we must sacrifice ourselves. Without doing so, nothing can come of it.

I too have followed the Lord until now, yet I am truly lacking. Now I have grown old, and it is hard even to take care of myself. But when I was young, I followed the will of God even in my insufficiency. I followed the will of God even knowing that I would be ruined. People all said to me that I would be ruined. They said that if I believed like that, preached like that, and lived like that, I would be ruined. But I resolved to be ruined. I resolved to lay down all the position and possessions I could have obtained in the world. I chose not to hold on to them but to go out and preach the gospel of the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross—that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Actually, seen with the eyes of the world, I am a ruined man.

The people I knew all left. Preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which they disliked, I was rather rejected. In the world no one received me. No relative, no member of my family received me. But if it is a work the Lord wants, I do it. Even if I die, I do it. It is because I did so that I have met you today and am preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

If I had not followed the Lord, I could not tell you to follow the Lord. If I told you to follow while I myself did not follow, it would make no sense. I am truly thankful that He has given grace so that I could follow the Lord like this.

Until the knowledge of the LORD fills the world

I now have a mind to finish up. But I do not think that having preached the gospel a long time means it has all been preached. In this age, if we preach only ten or twenty more years, we can preach so that there is hardly anyone in the whole world who does not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Scriptures say, *"For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9)*. Until the knowledge of God fills all the people of the whole world, I will preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit. We do not even need to preach for very long. I think that if we preach a comfortable twenty years, we can preach it fully.

This work does not even require many people. The more incompetent a leader is, the more people he needs. Having people is better than having none, but if there are none, God does it without them. Only, what is the use of claiming to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit while not following the will of God? There are those who tell their congregations to give offerings and then spend those offerings as they please, setting

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their hearts only on increasing their own property. Such people know the truth and yet do not follow it, and so they become those who fail to receive from God what they would have received. But the person who follows the truth receives blessing from God.

He who receives a righteous man receives a righteous man's reward

Now let us look at verse 34 and at the words from verse 40 on. In the last era, the person who receives a righteous man is receiving the Lord Himself. And the person who receives Jesus is receiving God the Father who sent Him. This is the basis of the life of faith. Since we are living in the last era, if we apply this word to our lives, we can know its meaning clearly.

The Lord said, *"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41).* Why does the one who receives a prophet receive a prophet's reward? It is because a prophet is one who reveals and teaches the will of God. If we accept a prophet and accept the word he delivers, that is accepting the word of God and accepting God. Therefore we come to receive a reward from God. When we receive a righteous man and receive a prophet, we are in the end accepting Jesus Christ. Conversely, if we reject a righteous man and reject a prophet, we are as a result rejecting God. Why is that so? It is because God does His will and His work through His people and His servants.

This is like one nation sending an ambassador to another nation. When a nation sends an envoy as its ambassador to another nation, that ambassador conveys the words of his nation's president to that nation's government. If they accept that ambassador but do not accept his words, it is the same as not

accepting the words of that government and that president. We are exactly the ambassadors of Jesus Christ. The righteous, too, are ambassadors of Jesus Christ, and the prophets are ambassadors of Jesus Christ and servants of God.

Therefore the Lord said, *"He who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:41)*. We must see whether that person has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit or not. If he has received the remission of sins, he is one of God's people and one who follows God's will. Then we must treat him as God's people, as God's worker. We must know him so, speak of him so, and treat him so.

Do not behave rudely; consider one another precious

Looking within our church, there are some ministers who treat those in lower positions carelessly. That is very wrong. When we deal with one another, we must see whether that person believes in Jesus Christ, who received the sin of the world passed on to Him by being baptized by John and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross for us—whether he believes in the Lord's righteousness, whether he is the Lord's person, the Lord's people. We must also see whether that person is the Lord's servant or not. We must look at the Lord who is behind that person, and receive him, serve him, and treat him accordingly. To listen to his words as precious is the normal way.

Of course, when someone under us does something utterly poor and anger rises, there are times when we thunder at him. But usually we do not do so. If the other person is a person who believes in God, a person who believes in Jesus Christ, we treat

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him courteously, because the name of God is upon him. We never treat him rudely. Concerning love the Scriptures say, *"Does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5)*. If he is one of God's people and I treat him rudely, it is the same as treating God rudely.

It is the same with human life. Proverbs says, *"He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy" (Proverbs 14:31)*. It also says, *"A righteous man regards the life of his animal, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" (Proverbs 12:10)*. The righteous consider precious even the life of an animal. It is because God has made it. How much more, then, could we treat carelessly the life of a person made in the image of God?

Among the ministers who come from all over the country, there are some who look at their leader with suspicious eyes, watching his moods. Should not one's heart rather be glad when he sees the person who leads him? If instead he watches the leader's face, it means his heart has been much pressed down. That is by no means a good thing. In that state neither character nor faith can grow properly. When I deal with the brothers and sisters, I always keep in mind that this young person is someone who believes in God. That is why I treat them with courtesy. When there is something they have done wrong I also rebuke them, but I treat them as an older brother treats a younger brother, as parents treat their children. We live together without walls between us.

I am now old and cannot bear great tasks. But if, being alive, I can stand in front and block those who would harm you, open the way for the work, and support what should be supported, would it not also be a good thing for me to live long? I consider myself a person who still has much to do for the workers.

"You did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me"

Therefore he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man receives a righteous man's reward. If we know that a person is Jesus Christ's person, God's own, God's people, and God's worker, and treat him accordingly, we receive a reward from God who is behind him. In Matthew chapter 25 the Lord said, *"I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in" (Matthew 25:35)*, and, *"I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me" (Matthew 25:36)*. When those on the right hand asked when they had done so, the Lord answered, *"Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40)*. What is done to God's people and God's servants is done to the Lord.

Therefore the life of faith is not something carried on merely person to person. Whether that person believes in the Lord or not, and, if he believes, whether he follows the will of God or not—from there true intimacy arises, and we come to treat one another as precious. In verse 42 the Lord said, *"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."* If we know that even the very least one is a person who serves the Lord and a disciple of Jesus, and treat him so, we receive a reward. That reward we receive not from that person but from Jesus Christ who is behind him.

When brothers and sisters are together like this, it is truly pleasant and good. God's Church is truly beautiful. In the days of the early Church there was such a church of God, and now on this earth also there is God's Church. You may take this church

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lightly, but this church is what God Himself has established. In it God Himself works. Seen with human eyes, there seems to be nothing much to admire in the one who preaches the word, and the church looks small, so there is a tendency to despise it. But it is the people that matter, not the building. If we set our minds to it we could put up a large building, but I never want that.

When I deal with you, I deal with you gently. But with the ministers who work in front, there are also many times when I am strict. It is because only when those who go before follow the will of God rightly can you who follow behind them also follow the will of God. You are truly precious. If we lead you well, with each passing year you gain greater realization, your faith grows, and you follow the Lord better. That is why we must bring you up well.

Build one another up with compassion and love

While we live on this earth and lead our church life, we must have this faith and share this fellowship. Even when we rebuke someone under us, there must surely be compassion. There must be a pitying heart and love. Without them, no one can lead a life of faith. When someone has done wrong, we must rebuke him and set him right. A person who realizes it by himself need not be rebuked, but a person who does not realize it and keeps repeating the wrong must be rebuked and corrected.

But the person who cannot follow however much he is rebuked must pray for himself: “God, this is what I am like. Give me wisdom and understanding and ability.” If he prays, God gives wisdom, understanding, and ability, and before he knows it makes him into a person who can follow the will of God. Our serving the Lord and working now is also not done by our own

ability. God has given each one of us the ability. The Scriptures say, *"If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies" (1 Peter 4:11)*. We serve with the strength God gives. I too am a truly insufficient person. But when I cannot do it by myself, I pray. I ask God for wisdom and go forward in faith.

But just as one does not leave alone a beast that attacks its master, God does not leave alone the person who rushes at God and stands against Him. God surely judges such a person. The Scriptures say, *"The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry" (Psalm 34:15)*, and, *"The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Psalm 34:16)*. The Lord inclines His ear to the cry of the righteous, and watches the one who stands against Him, and when the time comes He cuts him off.

God is not a Being who is only infinitely merciful. If God were only merciful and left alone those who stand against Him, where would justice stand? God gives blessing to the one who is to receive blessing, and surely stands against the one He must stand against. That is why He is God. Therefore we must fear God. God is infinitely kind and full of love, but when He is just, He is just beyond measure. The one who must be sent to hell He surely sends to hell. In this there is no exception whatsoever.

True life of faith, therefore, is like this. When we see one another working in the same church, and we know that person to be a precious worker and a person who believes in God and treat him so, we come to lead a true life of faith. From verse 40 on, the principle of the life of faith is laid out this clearly. People merely know this word and pass it by, but we must apply this word in our lives and live it out. We the righteous truly give thanks before God who has given such grace. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Treat one another as you would treat the Lord

< Matthew 10:40-42 >

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."

Today I intend to deliver the message briefly and close. The world is becoming harder and harder to live in. But God keeps us. Therefore we must believe in God and live thinking positively. Let us live boldly preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we must deliver.

"He who receives you receives Me"

The words of Matthew 10:40 to 42 speak about the things related to the Lord. First look at verse 40. The Lord said, *"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."*

Three kinds of people appear in this word. There is the

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person who regards the one who has received the remission of sins as a righteous person, receives him well, exchanges heart with him, and welcomes him. Such a person is one who welcomes Jesus. And the one who receives Jesus is one who receives God the Father. The Lord speaks in this way.

Next look at verses 41 and 42. *"He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." "And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

In a word, it is this. When we live together in the church, it is the question of how the righteous—who have received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus was baptized by John and took on the sin of the world, and received the judgment of sin for us by dying on the Cross shedding His blood—treat the workers who do God's work. We must welcome them gladly. We must look after their circumstances, ask what their difficulties are, and help them if there is anything to help with. All of that becomes work done toward the Lord. That is what the Lord is saying.

Everything is related to Jesus Christ

The person who gladly receives Jesus is a person who accepts and believes the will of God the Father. They are connected to one another in this way. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet receives a prophet's reward.

Here, what are the prophet, Jesus, God the Father, the righteous, and what is done to the very least little one all related

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to? They are all related to Jesus Christ. When we deal with the people related to Jesus Christ, if the person is a prophet and we treat him and serve him as such, we receive a prophet's reward. And if we treat God's worker as God's worker, that act is the same as an act done to Jesus, and so we receive the same reward. Our life of faith is exactly like this.

There are times when we meet and work together with a person who is not yet born again. This person is not yet born again, so he is one to whom we should preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We deal with him at that level, and set his mind at ease so that there is no great trouble and no misunderstanding. But when we gather among ourselves it is different. We must look at what work the brother or sister we meet has been entrusted with, and whether he is a worker of God doing God's work. To treat him fittingly according to that spiritual level and to be in harmony with him is work done toward God.

If you deal with me as you would deal with a prophet, you receive a prophet's reward. God gives such a blessing. And the person who receives a righteous man as a righteous man receives a righteous man's reward.

Even if a person's thinking is somewhat lacking in wisdom, once he is born again we must regard him as one of God's people and treat him as God's people. Rather than weighing public and private matters too strictly, we must treat him as a brother or a sister. We must treat him generously and soothe his heart as well. That is how we are to lead our life of faith. This is the point of the word.

Let us always deal with one another conscious of the Lord

Between the born-again and those not born again there is a complete difference. When we deal with people who do the work related to the Lord's work, we must deal with them as we would deal with the Lord. We must deal with them as with the Lord's workers, as with prophets. We must treat those who do God's work with a respectful heart.

I believe our Lord has spoken so to us. We must live that way. When we deal with a person, we must not look only at his human character. Beyond that, we must see that the Holy Spirit is in his heart. As if dealing with Jesus Christ, we must always keep in our hearts the question: how shall I treat this brother or sister so that it is treating the Lord? That is how we must treat one another.

But if we treat a righteous person carelessly and speak and act in ways that wound his heart, that must not be. We must always deal with the other person conscious of the Lord. Without such a heart it is a problem. Otherwise, how could this place be God's Church?

Being in the church, I always discern like this. If a person does the church's work and God's work, he is honorable and precious. So I regard him. And the person who is not yet born again is one to whom the gospel of the water and the Spirit should be preached. So I deal with him gently. If he comes at us too rudely, I also draw a clear line. But with our family members, we must above all deal with one another from Jesus' point of view.

We must not treat one another rudely. If we can, we must help each one bear God's work well in faith. We must care for him well so that the door of his heart does not close, and treat him well. The Lord is telling us that.

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Look at verse 42 again. *"And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."*

Is this person a brother or a sister who has received the remission of sins? Even if his character does not suit ours well, if he is a person who follows Jesus Christ, we must regard him as a disciple of Jesus. We must look at what gifts he has received and what part he has been entrusted with, and help him bear that work well. We must encourage his heart, and if he has lost strength, we must soothe him. The person who thus helps another bear the work entrusted to him receives a reward from God.

We do not do this work in order to receive a reward from God. We must simply become people who help one another bear God's work well and live well. The Lord is speaking that word. There is something we must keep in mind as we live. Even if a person does not suit my heart and does not suit my character, if he is a believer, a born-again person, a person who does God's work for God, we must deal with him up to that level. And we must treat him well so that his heart is not wounded.

There is also another kind of person: the one who says he believes but has not been born again and keeps doing wrong. This person is one to whom the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be preached. We must regard him so, share the gospel with him, and lead him. In this way we are to deal with people as these two kinds.

Looking at people, each has strengths and weaknesses. This person has these strengths and weaknesses, and that person has others. Still, we must see in him the faith that believes in the Lord. We must speak words that help him bear the work entrusted to him, do things that help him, and care for him. When there is something delicious, we should also share it and eat it

together. Why must we do so? Because he is a brother, a sister. Because he is one of God's people. Therefore we must do so as a matter of course.

The heart toward family who will not hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Then do the people who have become our brothers and sisters and one family in the world treat us that way? In many cases they do not. One relative of mine regards me as having fallen into heresy, treats me like an enemy, and despises me. Even when we run into each other at a prayer center, he quietly keeps his distance. I think of him as one who does not yet know the truth, one to whom the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be preached.

I said to him: listen once to what your uncle believes. Listen, and if it sounds like heresy, have nothing to do with it; and if it sounds right, you also believe it. But he would not listen. Thinking that if he listens he will be drawn in, he shuts his ears altogether. I spoke again: would it not be right to listen once to what this 'heresy' claims and then judge? But he does not regard me as his uncle; he rather regards me as an enemy.

So I decided that we need not redden our faces at each other. Since they consider me a heretic, I cannot force anything on them. Since they will not hear the gospel and treat me coldly, I too live without meddling. Still, in my heart I am always sorry. It is because, not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they are missing an enormous grace. I am only sorry that they fail to recognize the truth.

But you are not so. You are those who serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with me. You are those who believe

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in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus was baptized by John and received the sin of the world passed on to Him, and received in our place the judgment of all that sin on the Cross. Therefore you are God's people, Jesus' disciples who serve Jesus, those who follow and serve Jesus. We are one family.

Though we are one family, within it there are clearly offices, and the places entrusted to each are different. But in whatever position we are, we must be of help to one another. For we are true family in heart, a beloved family. When someone acts hatefully, we may indeed find him hateful. Even so, as far as we can, we must help one another live well. Within us there is the heart that wants to do so.

How must we live? Those whom Jesus considers precious, we too must consider precious. The person who serves Jesus well and lives faithfully—we too must see him so. We must regard him, thinking, "Ah, this person is a precious worker of God." We must deal with him from the angle at which Jesus sees him. Live with that faith. I will close the message. ✉

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CHAPTER

11

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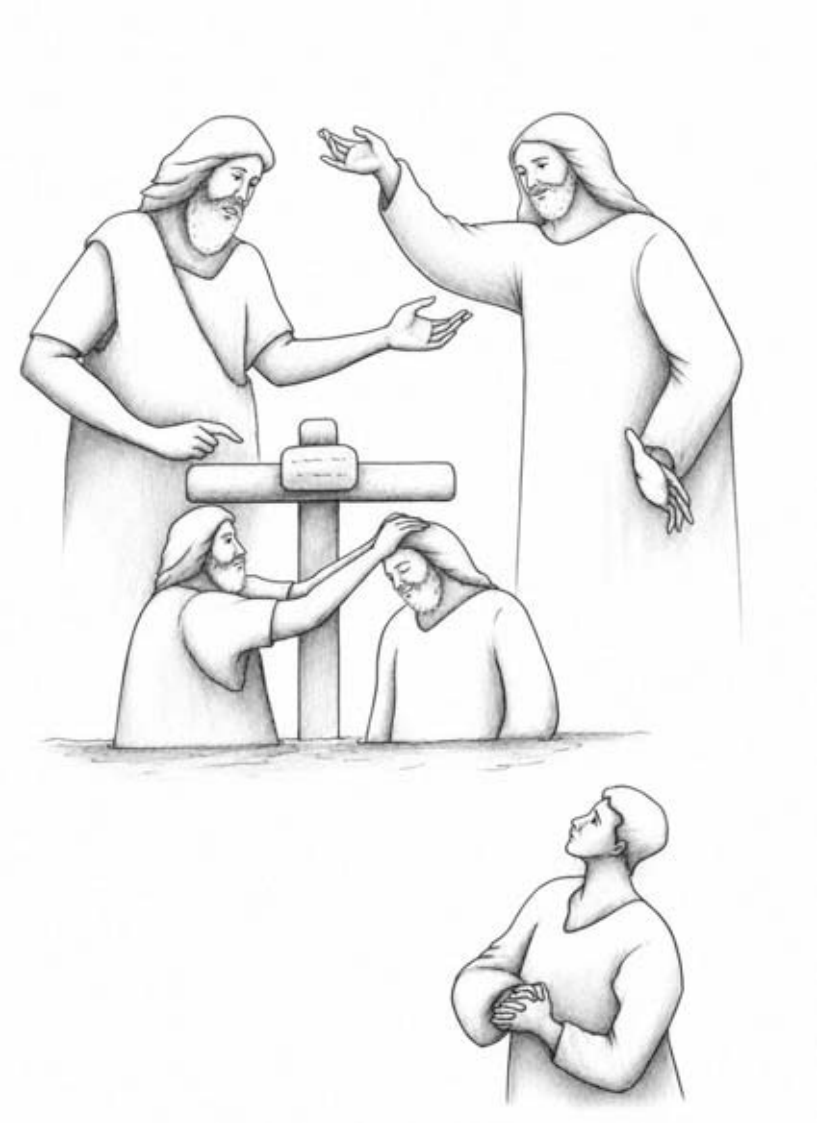

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Matthew Chapter 11

< Matthew 11:1-30 >

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! 'But to what shall I liken this

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generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children.' Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.' At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'"

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1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 11 is the chapter that deals with the question ‘Who indeed is Jesus?’ and with how we are to receive Him. Beginning with the question of John the Baptist, who was shut up in prison, Jesus testifies by the works He did that He is the promised Christ. He then esteems highly the mission of John the Baptist, and rebukes the stubborn generation that rejects the word of God and the cities that did not repent. At the end, He promises to give true rest to the person who lays down his own wisdom and comes to the Lord.

1. Jesus kept on teaching and preaching (verse 1)

After Jesus finished the words of sending to His twelve disciples, He Himself also went about the cities, teaching and preaching. Having sent the disciples out as workers of the gospel in chapter 10, Jesus continued His own evangelistic ministry. He did not merely send out the disciples and give orders from behind; He Himself taught the word of the kingdom of God and sought out souls.

2. The question of John the Baptist in prison (verses 2–6)

John the Baptist, seized by Herod and shut up in prison, sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, *“Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”*

The passage does not clearly explain why John the Baptist asked this question. In the suffering of prison he may have felt confused for a moment because the manner of Jesus’ ministry was different from what he had expected, or his intention may have been to have his own disciples meet Jesus in person and confirm that He is the Christ. Either way, Jesus did not rebuke John, nor did He answer merely, ‘I am the Christ.’

Jesus said to report to John that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. This means that the ministry of the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament was actually being accomplished through Jesus. The works Jesus did were themselves the evidence that He is the promised Savior.

The words *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me"* mean that we must not doubt or abandon Jesus just because He works in a way different from our own expectations. True faith is not fitting Jesus into one's own thoughts, but accepting who Jesus is through the word and through the works He has accomplished.

3. The mission of John the Baptist, who was more than a prophet (verses 7–11)

After John's disciples left, Jesus explained to the multitudes what kind of person John the Baptist was. John was not a person like a reed swaying according to people's reactions, nor was he a person living comfortably in a king's palace and courting people's favor. He was a prophet who boldly cried out the word of God in the wilderness.

But Jesus called John not a mere prophet but one who is *"more than a prophet."* The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied from afar the Christ who was to come, but John the Baptist was sent immediately before the Christ, prepared the way of the Lord, and testified of Jesus directly. He was entrusted with the special mission of connecting the age of prophecy and the age of fulfillment.

That Jesus said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist,"* was also not a word exalting John's human ability or social position. It means that the mission he was entrusted with in God's history of salvation

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was very great.

Yet Jesus added, *"He who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* This does not mean that the character or faith of John the Baptist was small. John was the person who prepared for and testified of the fulfillment of the promise, but the person who has entered the kingdom of God by believing the gospel completed after Jesus' death and resurrection stands in the position of directly enjoying that fulfillment. John's mission was great, but the grace of the salvation Jesus would complete is greater still.

4. The words *"the kingdom of heaven suffers violence"* (verses 12–15)

The words *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force"* do not mean to seize the kingdom of heaven with violence or human strength. This verse is one of the words that are difficult to interpret.

On the one hand, it can be seen to mean that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of God has been coming with power, and that those who receive that word by faith lay hold of the kingdom of heaven eagerly. On the other hand, the context can also include the meaning that, as John the Baptist was imprisoned, the gospel of the kingdom of God and its workers were suffering violent opposition and persecution.

The clear center is that with the appearing of John the Baptist the prophecy of the Old Testament entered the stage of fulfillment, and the kingdom of God no longer remains only a promise of the distant future. Man does not enter the kingdom of heaven automatically by lineage or religious position; he must receive by faith the salvation God has accomplished.

The words *"all the prophets and the law prophesied until*

John" mean that the age the law and the prophets of the Old Testament looked toward came to its close in John the Baptist, and the age of fulfillment through Jesus Christ began. John was a person who carried out a mission like that of the Elijah who was to come; it does not mean that Elijah was born again in another body.

5. The stubborn generation that responds to no word (verses 16–19)

Jesus likened the people of that day to children in the marketplace complaining that others would not move according to their wishes. That they did not dance when the flute was played and did not lament when there was mourning means that however God spoke, the people did not respond.

When John the Baptist lived a strict life of self-denial in the wilderness, people accused him of having a demon. Conversely, when Jesus ate with people and drew near to tax collectors and sinners, they accused Him of being a glutton and a winebibber and a friend of sinners.

Since they rejected John when he came strictly and rejected Jesus when He approached them graciously, the problem did not lie in the manner in which God's messengers delivered the word. A person who has no heart to receive the word of God finds an excuse to refuse it however it is delivered.

But Jesus said, *"Wisdom is justified by her children."* People's accusations cannot make the work of God wrong. The results accomplished through John the Baptist and Jesus prove in the end that God's plan and wisdom were right.

6. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, which did not repent (verses 20–24)

Jesus sternly rebuked Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum,

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where most of His mighty works had been done. These cities heard Jesus' words and saw numerous miracles, but they did not repent.

Repentance does not mean merely regretting one's wrongs and shedding tears. It is turning from the attitude that clung to one's own thoughts and sins, believing in Jesus, and receiving the word of God. Yet these cities, though they had received much grace and much evidence, did not turn their hearts.

Jesus said that if the mighty works done for them had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, and that if the works done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, that city would have remained. This does not mean that the sins of Tyre and Sidon or of Sodom were light. It means that greater responsibility rests on those who have received more of the word and more evidence.

The mere fact of having heard the gospel much and accumulated much Bible knowledge does not save anyone. If one does not humble his heart before the word he has heard and receive it by faith, the word he has heard much of can rather make his responsibility in the judgment heavier.

7. The truth of salvation revealed to those who are like little children (verses 25–27)

Jesus gave thanks that God had hidden the truth of salvation from those who consider themselves wise and prudent and had revealed it to those who are like little children.

This word does not mean that knowledge or deep thought is bad in itself. He was pointing out the proud attitude that depends on one's own knowledge and religious merits and judges the word of God. To be like a little child does not mean to believe without any thought; it means the heart that humbles itself before God and receives the word as it is.

Jesus also revealed the special relationship of the Father and the Son. Only the Father fully knows the Son, and only the Son, and the one who has received the Son's revelation, can know the Father. God is not an object that man discovers by researching with his own wisdom; He is the One who reveals Himself through Jesus Christ. Therefore, to know and meet God the Father, we must come to Him through His Son, Jesus.

8. The rest given to those who labor and are heavy laden (verses 28–30)

Matthew chapter 11 does not end with a warning of judgment but closes with the Lord's warm invitation.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

The heavy burden here includes not only the toil and anxieties of life but also guilt, the condemnation of the Law, and the religious labor of trying to become righteous by one's own strength. Though man cannot remove his sins by himself, he thinks that if he lives better, prays more, and piles up more merits, he can become righteous before God. But with such efforts he cannot obtain the true rest of the heart.

Jesus did not tell people to come after first putting their burdens in order. He told them to come to Him just as they were, carrying their heavy burdens. And He said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."* The rest the Lord gives is not an irresponsible life of doing nothing; it is laying down the heavy yoke of trying to save oneself by one's own strength, and living while learning from Jesus, who is gentle and lowly.

That Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden is light does not mean that there is no difficulty at all in following Jesus. The life of a disciple can involve sacrifice and hardship. But because we need not shoulder the burden of salvation alone,

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and because we walk together with the Lord who saved us by grace, that yoke is incomparably lighter than the yoke of the sin and condemnation of the world.

The central meaning of Matthew chapter 11

Matthew chapter 11 testifies through the works Jesus did that He is the promised Christ. John the Baptist was a special messenger sent to prepare the way of the Christ and to testify of Him directly. But the people of that day rejected John the Baptist, refused Jesus as well, and did not repent even after seeing many mighty works.

Conversely, to the person who lays down his own wisdom and righteousness and receives the word like a little child, Jesus reveals God the Father, and He gives true rest of heart to the person pressed down by sin, condemnation, and religious labor.

To sum up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 11 is the word that reveals through the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus that Jesus is the promised Savior, warns of judgment those who stubbornly reject the gospel, and promises true rest to those who humbly come to the Lord.

2) Matthew chapter 11 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Matthew chapter 11 is the chapter that reveals that Jesus is the promised Christ and explains that John the Baptist is the special witness who prepared the way of the Christ. It also says that judgment follows for those who reject this testimony, but that true rest, the rest of laying down the burden of sin, is given to those who receive the word like little children.

This chapter itself does not explain the baptism and the Cross of Jesus over again from the beginning. But because it especially emphasizes the position of John the Baptist, when we read it in connection with the baptism Jesus received from John in Matthew chapter 3, the gospel of the water and the Spirit appears still more clearly.

1. The question of John the Baptist and Jesus' answer (verses 1–6)

John the Baptist, shut up in prison, sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* This was not because John the Baptist doubted Jesus on account of his suffering. He had already baptized Jesus and passed the sins of mankind on to Him, and he had confirmed the Holy Spirit coming upon Jesus and God the Father testifying that He is His beloved Son. He had also testified to the people that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Therefore John the Baptist, before finishing his ministry and leaving this world, sent his disciples so that they would meet Jesus in person, realize that He is the promised Messiah, and become Jesus' disciples—he was handing them over to the Lord.

Jesus' answer was clear. Jesus did not merely claim in words that He is the Christ; He told the disciples to report to John the Baptist what they had heard and seen for themselves: the blind seeing, the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised, and the poor having the gospel preached to them. This was the sure evidence that the ministry of the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament was actually being fulfilled through Jesus. Through this word and work, the disciples of John had to realize that Jesus is the Christ sent by God and follow Him.

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Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, Jesus is not One who heals only the diseases of the body but the Savior who brings to life even the souls sick and dead in sin. It is Jesus Christ who opens the eyes and ears of truth for the person who because of sin cannot see, cannot hear, and cannot come to God, and who gives the remission of sins and eternal life to the person under sin and death.

Jesus did not come only to heal people's bodies. He came to remove all the sins of mankind and to make sinners God's righteous people and children. For this, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John. And He bore that sin, hung on the Cross, was judged shedding His blood, and rose again from among the dead, thereby overcoming sin and death and becoming our perfect Savior. Therefore the miracles Jesus did and the gospel He preached to the poor are the ministry of the true Messiah, who gives sinners the remission of sins and new life.

The words *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me"* are also important. The disciples of John the Baptist were not to follow only John the Baptist, bound by human loyalty or their own thoughts; they had to believe in the Jesus whom John testified of as the Christ and follow Him. John the Baptist himself also knew that he must decrease and Jesus must increase, and he led his disciples to the Lord.

Today as well, a person can easily be offended if the salvation Jesus accomplished does not fit his own thoughts or his existing doctrines. He may accept the blood of the Cross and yet refuse the word that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, simply because it sounds unfamiliar. But true faith is not picking out and believing only the parts that fit one's own

thoughts; it is accepting, just as the written word says, the work of salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit and follows Jesus as his perfect Savior is the blessed person who is not offended because of Him.

2. Why John the Baptist was more than a prophet (verses 7–11)

Jesus did not describe John the Baptist as a reed shaken by the wind or as a man clothed in soft garments living in a king's palace. He was not a person who moved according to people's evaluations or the powers of the world; he was God's servant who boldly cried out the word of God in the wilderness and prepared the way of the Lord.

Jesus called John the Baptist one who is *"more than a prophet,"* and He said, *"Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist."* This does not mean that John's human character, ability, and social position surpassed all people. It means that the office and mission God entrusted to him for the salvation of mankind were that great and that important.

The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied the Christ who was to come. But John the Baptist met the prophesied Christ in person and testified that He is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind. As the last prophet of the Old Testament he not only prepared the way of the Christ but also carried out the office of baptizing Jesus Himself. In this respect he was more than the prophets of the Old Testament.

Here also lies the reason John the Baptist could become the representative of mankind. God caused him to be born in the family of Zacharias the priest, and had him carry out the office of the last prophet of the Old Testament and the last High

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Priest representing mankind. Jesus evaluated John the Baptist as the greatest among *"those born of women"* because he was raised up to baptize Jesus on behalf of all people born in the flesh.

In the era of the Old Testament, the high priest, representing the people of Israel, laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed the people's sins onto it. In the same way, John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. He did not pass on only his own personal sins; he performed the office of transferring to Jesus, the Lamb of God, the sins committed by all people from Adam until the last day of the world.

Jesus was the sinless Son of God, but with the baptism He received from John He took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body. When Jesus said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15),* it meant that as John the Baptist baptized Him on behalf of mankind and Jesus received that baptism, the righteousness of God that saves sinners would be fulfilled.

After finishing this office, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).* Jesus could carry away the sin of the world because He had received that sin passed on to His own body through the baptism. Therefore John the Baptist, after baptizing Jesus, completed the mission given to him by testifying openly to all that Jesus is the Lamb of God who took on the sins of mankind.

The Cross of Jesus, therefore, cannot be separated from the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Because Jesus had taken on all the sins of the world with His baptism, He could bear that sin, hang on the Cross, and be judged shedding His blood. And by rising again from among the dead He became

our eternal Savior. Without knowing the office of John the Baptist as the representative of mankind, it is hard to understand fully when and through whom Jesus took on the sin of the world and why He was crucified.

3. The meaning that even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John (verse 11)

After saying that John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women, Jesus said that even the least person in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. This word does not mean that John the Baptist was not saved or that his faith was lacking.

John was the person who closed the prophecy of the Old Testament and connected the ministry of salvation to Jesus. He was the witness who opened the door for the promised salvation to be fulfilled. But the person who believes in the salvation Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God who has entered into that fulfillment.

John the Baptist prepared for and testified of the fulfillment of salvation, but the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the person who has actually been clothed in the righteousness Jesus completed. This, therefore, is not a word about human ranking but about the difference of era and position given in the history of salvation. It is a word that reveals how great the grace of the new covenant Jesus completed is.

4. The meaning that the violent take the kingdom of heaven by force (verses 12–15)

The words *"the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the*

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violent take it by force" do not mean to seize the kingdom of heaven by human strength or violence. Considering the situation in which John the Baptist was imprisoned, they can include the meaning that the kingdom of God was meeting the violence and opposition of the world. At the same time, they can also be understood to mean that the person who hears the gospel of the kingdom of God and receives it by faith obtains the kingdom of heaven as his own.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not automatically become one's own just by hearing it. We must believe the fact that with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist He took on not only other people's sins but my own sins as well. We must receive with the heart the word that when the Lord was baptized by John, He received even my past, present, and future sins passed on to Him, and that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross in my place.

This faith is not human merit or zeal. It is the faith that acknowledges as it is what God has done. The person who believes, "The Lord took on all my sins through His baptism; He paid the price of my sins completely on the Cross; He rose again and became my eternal Savior," enters the kingdom of God.

The words *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John"* stand in the same flow. The plan of salvation that the law and the prophets of the Old Testament had prophesied was connected to Jesus through the ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist received a mission like that of the Elijah who was to come, turned people's hearts back to the Lord, and prepared the way of Jesus Christ. By baptizing Jesus he took charge of the important role by which the promise of the Old Testament passed over into the fulfillment of the New Testament.

5. The stubborn heart that rejected both John the Baptist and Jesus (verses 16–19)

When John the Baptist lived an ascetic life, the people of that day accused him of having a demon; and when Jesus was together with tax collectors and sinners, they accused Him of being a glutton and a winebibber. They rejected John when he came strictly, and rejected Jesus when He drew near to sinners.

The problem was not the manner in which the word was delivered but the stubborn hearts of the people. When there is no heart to receive the will of God, people make excuses and refuse whatever evidence appears. To keep the religious standards and doctrines they already hold, people can reject even the salvation the Scriptures testify to.

Today as well, there are many who speak of Jesus' Cross and yet pay no attention to why the Lord was baptized by John. They think it is enough to believe only in the blood of the Cross, and yet they say that sin still remains in their hearts. But if we leave out the fact that Jesus took on all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, it is hard to explain clearly what sins were judged on the Cross.

The baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are not events separated from one another. Through all these works God has saved sinners completely. So Jesus said, *"Wisdom is justified by her children."* Though people accuse and reject Him, the result of the salvation Jesus accomplished proves that the wisdom of God is right.

6. The cities that saw many mighty works and yet did not repent (verses 20–24)

Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum heard much of Jesus' word and also saw numerous mighty works. But they did not repent. Repentance here does not stop at regretting emotionally

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or confessing one's wrongs. It is abandoning one's own thoughts and one's own righteousness and turning to the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished.

If a person believes, 'I am still a sinner, so my sins are washed away only if I offer prayers of repentance every day,' he is thinking that his own works wash away sin. Confessing our wrongs to God and turning from them in our lives is necessary, but our confession and tears do not pay the price of sin. The work of removing sin has already been accomplished by Jesus.

Jesus received sin passed on to Him by being baptized by John the Baptist, and He received the judgment of that sin on the Cross in our place. True repentance is turning from the way of trying to solve one's sins with one's own religious merits, and believing the word that the Lord has already removed all our sins.

Because Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum received much evidence, their responsibility was also great. In the same way, if today a person hears the gospel much and knows the Scriptures much and still rejects the righteousness of God, his responsibility is all the heavier. It is not the number of times one has heard the word that saves a person; what is needed is the faith that believes with the heart the word one has heard.

7. The truth of salvation revealed to those who are like little children (verses 25–27)

Jesus gave thanks that God had hidden the truth of salvation from those who claim to be wise and prudent and had revealed it to those who are like little children. This does not mean that studying or thinking is wrong. He was pointing out the pride that exalts one's own knowledge and experience above the word of God.

Childlike faith is not following blindly without any discernment. It is the humble faith that receives the word as it is because God has spoken it. In man's thinking the question can arise, 'How can the one person Jesus take on all the sins of the world by receiving baptism?' But if God has said that *"it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,"* then faith is exalting the word of God above one's own thoughts.

God the Father reveals Himself through the Son. Therefore no one can know God apart from Jesus. When we believe who Jesus is and by what method He has saved us, we come to know the love and the righteousness of God the Father. The Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that this salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood is the true righteousness of God.

8. Jesus, who takes off the heavy burden of sin from those who labor (verse 28)

Jesus said:

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"

The most fundamental burden man carries is the burden of sin. The burden of being condemned before the Law, the burden of guilt pressing on the conscience, the fear of judgment, and the religious labor of trying to wash away one's sins with good deeds and prayers of repentance wear out the human heart.

Jesus did not say to come after putting one's sins somewhat in order. Nor did He say to come after living better and becoming more godly. He said to come to Him just as we are, carrying the heavy burden. To come to the Lord does not simply mean attending church or receiving emotional comfort; it means believing the gospel of the remission of sins that Jesus

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has accomplished.

Jesus Himself received our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John. The Lord bore that sin and shed His blood on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment we ought to have received, and He completed salvation by rising again from among the dead. Therefore Jesus can say to us, 'I have removed all your sins. Believe this fact and receive rest.'

When a person believes this gospel with the heart, he no longer remains under the condemnation of being a sinner. He believes the word that Jesus has washed his sins away completely, receives the remission of sins, and comes to have the faith that he is righteous before God. This is the true rest of heart the Lord gives.

9. The life that takes His yoke and learns from Jesus (verses 29–30)

After saying that He would give rest, Jesus said, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me."* Receiving the remission of sins is not the end of faith but the beginning of a new life. The person who has received the remission of sins must now turn from the life he lived only for his own desires and live learning from Jesus, who is gentle and lowly.

To take the Lord's yoke is not to carry again the heavy burden of the Law. Nor is it to pile up works in order to receive salvation. It is for the person already saved freely to follow the Lord's will with thanksgiving and to serve the gospel.

Before being saved we carried the burden of having to solve our own sins by ourselves, but now Jesus has taken on that burden entirely. After receiving the remission of sins, we live a life of upholding the gospel together with the Lord and delivering this salvation to other souls. In this life too there are

labor and sacrifice, but because it is not the anxious labor of trying to obtain salvation, the Lord's yoke is easy and His burden is light.

We must not reverse the order of salvation and the serving of the gospel. It is not that we are saved by serving the gospel; we first receive the remission of sins by believing in the righteousness Jesus accomplished, and then serve the Lord in gratitude for that grace.

To sum up as a whole

In Matthew chapter 11 the mission of John the Baptist is connected as one with the saving work of Jesus. John the Baptist was the messenger of God who prepared the way of the Lord, and he was used in the work by which the sins of mankind passed over to Jesus as he baptized Him. Jesus took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and saved sinners completely by rising again.

But the person who clings to his own thoughts and religious righteousness accepts neither the testimony of John the Baptist nor the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. Conversely, the person who humbles his heart like a little child and believes the word as it is receives the remission of sins, enters the kingdom of God, and no longer lives under the heavy burden of sin, the Law, and condemnation, but obtains the true rest of heart.

To sum up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 11 is the word that reveals through the testimony of John the Baptist that Jesus is the true Christ, and that gives the kingdom of heaven and true rest to the person who believes the gospel that the Lord has removed all sins with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 11

Jesus gives true rest to those who labor and are heavy laden

Introduction

Matthew chapter 11 begins with the question of John the Baptist, who was shut up in prison. John sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* Jesus did not answer in words only; He told them to report to John the fact that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. This was the answer that the works of the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament were being fulfilled exactly in Jesus.

Jesus then testified Himself to what kind of person John the Baptist was. John was not a reed shaken by the wind but the messenger of God sent to prepare the way before the Lord, and the greatest among those born of women. Yet Jesus said that even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John. This word reveals not the greatness of a man, but how great the grace is that the person who has entered the salvation Jesus accomplishes receives.

But that generation received neither the testimony of John the Baptist nor the word of Jesus. Jesus likened them to children who do not dance when the flute is played and do not lament at mourning, and rebuked the stubborn heart that responds to no word. Upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, which saw many mighty works and did not repent,

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a judgment heavier than that of the land of Sodom was declared for the day of judgment. Even seeing the work of God before one's eyes, if one does not abandon his own righteousness and fixed thoughts, he cannot receive the gospel of salvation.

Jesus gave thanks that the Father had hidden the truth of the kingdom of heaven from the wise and prudent and revealed it to babes. The truth of salvation is not grasped by human knowledge and religious merit; it opens to the person who lowers himself like a little child and receives the word of God as it is. And Jesus gave the invitation, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

The heaviest burden man carries is the burden of sin. The person who tries to wash away his sins with his own prayers of repentance and good deeds cannot escape the burden of sin however hard he tries; he only labors. Jesus took on all the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received all the judgment by bearing that sin and dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and overcame the power of sin and death by rising from the dead. When a person believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which John the Baptist, representing mankind, passed the sins over to Jesus, he receives the remission of all sins and enters the true rest Jesus gives.

Matthew chapter 11 testifies that Jesus is the true Christ promised in the Old Testament, warns the stubborn heart that refuses that testimony of judgment, and promises true rest to the person who receives the gospel like a little child. Now, examining the words of the passage in order, let us look into how the mission of John the Baptist and the saving work of Jesus are connected, and how the person who labors and is heavy laden obtains true rest.

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John the Baptist is the messenger of God who passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus and prepared the way of the kingdom of heaven

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! 'But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to

you, And you did not lament.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children.'" (Matthew 11:1–19).

Even after sending out the twelve disciples, Jesus went about the cities teaching the word and preaching the gospel. The preaching of the gospel was not a work left only to the disciples but a work Jesus Himself kept doing. The purpose of all Jesus' ministry was to lead sinners to the kingdom of God and to reveal that He is the Savior sent by God.

John the Baptist, shut up in prison, sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, *"Are You the Coming One?"* John the Baptist had already heard the testimony of heaven when he baptized Jesus, and he had testified of Jesus as *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* Therefore we need not see this question only as a doubt asked because John did not know Jesus at all. At the least, through this event the disciples of John came to hear Jesus' word directly and to confirm His ministry.

Jesus did not answer in words only that He is the Messiah; He told the disciples to report to John what they had seen and heard. The blind seeing, the lame walking, the lepers being cleansed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised, and the poor having the gospel preached to them were the signs of the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. These miracles testified that Jesus is the Son of God who rules over life and disease, and the true Savior.

But the most important thing in Jesus' ministry was that the gospel was preached to the poor. The poor here do not mean only those who lack material things. They are the spiritually poor, who admit that they have no righteousness of their own

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and cannot solve their sins by themselves, and who seek the grace of God. To such sinners Jesus preached the gospel of the remission of sins that He would accomplish with the water and the Spirit.

The words *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me"* mean that people must not stumble when they see a Jesus different from their own expectations. The people of that day expected a Messiah who would overthrow Rome and liberate them politically. But Jesus, in a lowly form, was together with sinners and saved souls from sin. Today as well, if a person does not lay down his own religious thoughts, he can fail to accept the salvation accomplished through Jesus' baptism and the Cross, and stumble.

Jesus did not describe John the Baptist as a reed shaken by the wind or a man clothed in soft garments living in a king's palace. John the Baptist did not move according to people's praise or the favor of the powerful. He cried out repentance in the wilderness, and he was imprisoned for rebuking even the sin of King Herod. He was a prophet who considered the mission God had entrusted to him more precious than his own comfort.

Jesus testified that John the Baptist is more than a prophet, the messenger God sent before the Christ. The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied from afar the Messiah who was to come, but John the Baptist met the Jesus who had actually come, baptized Him, and testified of Him directly. He was the last prophet, who connected the prophecy of the Old Testament and the saving ministry of Jesus.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the reason John the Baptist is the greatest among those born of women is that he was used in the ministry of baptizing Jesus on behalf of mankind. Born in the family of Zacharias the

priest, he was raised up by God to carry out the office of the last prophet of the Old Testament and the last High Priest representing mankind. Jesus, taking on all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, said, *"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness."* With this baptism all the sins of mankind were passed on to Jesus' body, and Jesus bore that sin, was judged on the Cross, and then completed our salvation by rising from the dead.

The words *"But he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he"* do not mean that John the Baptist was not saved or is worthless in the kingdom of heaven. They mean that even for John the Baptist, who received the greatest office in the world, the standing and glory enjoyed by the person who has received the remission of sins and become God's child in the kingdom of heaven are greater still. However high a position in this world may be, it cannot be greater than the blessing of being born again of water and the Spirit and becoming one of the people of the kingdom of God.

The words *"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force"* do not mean that one seizes the kingdom of heaven by violence or human zeal. They mean that after John the Baptist baptized Jesus and the sins of mankind passed over to Him, whoever believes this righteousness of God can enter the kingdom of God boldly. The faith that takes the kingdom of heaven by force is not a faith that puts forward its own merits, but the faith that believes the fact that Jesus' baptism, Cross, and resurrection have solved all one's sins, and lays hold of God's promise.

As the words *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John"* say, John the Baptist stands at the decisive point connecting the Old Testament and the New Testament. The law

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and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament foreshadowed the salvation in which sins passed to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands and the offering was judged, shedding its blood. When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, this foreshadowing was fulfilled in substance, and Jesus became the Lamb of God who took on the sin of the world.

Jesus said that John the Baptist is the Elijah whom God had promised in the Old Testament to send. This does not mean that John the Baptist was the Elijah of the past born again; it means that with the spirit and mission like Elijah's he did the work of turning the people of Israel back to God. He cried out repentance to the people and pointed to Jesus as the Savior, thereby preparing the way of the Lord.

But the people of that day said that John the Baptist had a demon when he lived a life of self-denial, and they slandered Jesus as a glutton when He ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners. They found excuses not to believe however the word of God was delivered to them. Like children who do not dance when the flute is played and do not beat their breasts at mourning, they responded neither to the word of God's joy nor to the word of judgment.

The words *"But wisdom is justified by her children"* mean that the rightness of God's plan of salvation is revealed through its fruits. God sent John the Baptist, had Jesus receive baptism from him and take on the sins of mankind, and completed the remission of sins with the Cross and the resurrection. That all sins disappear from the heart of the person who believes this gospel and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in him is the evidence that the wisdom of God is right.

Matthew 11:1–19, therefore, teaches us that we must not leave out the ministry of John the Baptist while saying we believe in Jesus. We must believe together the work by which

John the Baptist baptized Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him, and the work by which Jesus bore that sin and was judged on the Cross. The person who believes Jesus' baptism, Cross, and resurrection as one is the person who has the true faith that is born again of water and the Spirit and enters the kingdom of heaven.

The stubbornness that sees many mighty works and yet does not believe the gospel of salvation calls down a heavier judgment

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.'" (Matthew 11:20–24).

When the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where most of His mighty works had been done, did not repent, Jesus rebuked them sternly. They heard Jesus' words directly, and they saw the sick healed, demons cast out, and amazing mighty works appear. These mighty works were not miracles merely to solve the problems of the body; they were the evidence revealing that Jesus is the Son of God and the Christ

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who came to save sinners.

But even seeing Jesus' mighty works, they did not receive Him into their hearts. They wanted to gain fleshly benefit through the miracles, but they did not believe the fact that they were sinners before God and that Jesus is the Savior who came to solve their sin. The reason Jesus rebuked them was not that they had failed to see His power, but that they had seen sufficient evidence and still had not turned their hearts.

The repentance spoken of here is not simply regretting one's wrongs or shedding tears. True repentance is laying down one's own thoughts and one's own righteousness and returning to the word of salvation God has accomplished. To admit that one has sin, and to turn from trying to solve that sin by one's own works and believe the salvation Jesus Christ has completed—this is true repentance.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God sent Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit and come to this earth, as our Savior. Jesus took on all the sins of the world onto His own body by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment of those sins by shedding His blood on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from among the dead. To repent, therefore, is to receive with the heart this baptism, Cross, and resurrection of Jesus, and to believe that all one's sins were passed on to Jesus and judged.

Jesus said that if the same mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. This does not mean that the sins of Tyre and Sidon were light. It means that the responsibility of Chorazin and Bethsaida was greater because they had met far more of the word and of mighty works and still did not believe. The greater the light and grace received from God, the greater the responsibility for refusing them.

It was the same with Capernaum. Capernaum was the place where Jesus preached much of the word and did mighty works, but that abundant grace did not guarantee their salvation. The words *"who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades"* mean that they became proud because they had received special grace, and yet the result of not believing in the Savior is judgment. The mere facts of hearing the gospel up close and knowing the Scriptures well cannot bring the remission of sins.

That Jesus said it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum has the same meaning. Sodom was a city judged for the corruption of the flesh, but Capernaum saw the Son of God, Jesus, in person and did not receive Him. However morally good and religiously devout a person may look in human eyes, if he rejects the Savior God has sent and the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished, he cannot escape the judgment of sin.

This word is a warning given also to us who hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit today. What matters is not how much we have heard the gospel but whether we have believed it with the heart. We must believe the fact that when Jesus was baptized He received all my sins passed on to Him, that He received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and that He justified me by rising again. To lay down one's own thoughts and righteousness and accept this word of salvation is true repentance, and the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives not judgment but eternal life.

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Those who receive the gospel like little children obtain true rest in Jesus

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'" (Matthew 11:25–30).

After speaking of how the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had seen many mighty works and yet did not repent, Jesus thanked God the Father for hiding the truth of salvation from the wise and prudent and revealing it to babes. *"These things"* here refers to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind sent by God, and to the work of salvation He accomplishes.

"The wise and prudent" are not people condemned merely for having much knowledge. They mean those who exalt their own knowledge, experience, and religious righteousness above the word of God and judge God's method of salvation by their own thoughts. Man cannot understand God with his own wisdom or solve his sins with his own good deeds. If he clings to his own thoughts and does not receive the word of God, he cannot realize the truth of salvation however much of the Scriptures he knows.

Conversely, *"babes"* does not mean people without any

discernment. It refers to those who admit their lack before God and receive the written word with a pure heart. Just as a little child trusts the words of his parents, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is revealed to the person who believes God's method of salvation as it is, without changing it by his own thoughts. This is the meaning of the words *"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."*

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the salvation God planned in Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world. Jesus, the Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the flesh, received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And He bore that sin, hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, receiving all the punishment of sin, and rose again from among the dead, becoming the eternal Savior of those who believe.

When Jesus said, *"Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him,"* it means that man cannot discover God with his own wisdom. God the Father has revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. To know God, therefore, does not mean vaguely acknowledging the existence of a deity; it means knowing and believing through the word who Jesus is and what He has accomplished for sinners.

In the words *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,"* the most fundamental heavy burden is sin and the judgment that follows it. Man fears because of the sins piled on his conscience, and labors to wash away his sins with his own works and repeated prayers of repentance. But however good a life he lives and however tearfully he prays, he cannot completely remove his sins by his own strength. The anxieties and pains of life are heavy burdens too, but the

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heaviest burden, which drags man to eternal destruction, is unresolved sin.

The rest Jesus gives does not mean that a person stops all he has to do and lives without any difficulty. It means that when we believe that He received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, the burden of sin and condemnation is lifted from the heart. Because Jesus has completed salvation, the believer no longer needs to strive to achieve the remission of sins by his own works. The words *"and I will give you rest"* are the promise that the Lord will freely give the rest of soul and the remission of sins that a sinner can never make for himself.

Jesus said, *"For I am gentle and lowly in heart."* Jesus is not One who calls sinners to take something from them or to gain His own profit. Rather, to save sinners He lowered Himself, received baptism Himself, and took on even the suffering of the Cross. The Lord's gentleness and lowliness did not remain a mere beauty of character; they appeared as the sacrificial love that gave Himself to save sinners.

The words *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"* do not mean to carry again the heavy burden of the Law. To take Jesus' yoke is to believe the salvation He completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, and now to live following the Lord's will rather than one's own desires. It is to learn gentleness and lowliness from the Lord, to seek the good of others, and to live a life of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the souls not yet saved.

The reason the Lord's yoke is easy and His burden is light is that we do not produce salvation by our works. Jesus completed salvation first, and the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the believer and helps him live following the will of

God. The life of serving the gospel can have labor and hardship, but it is different from the burden of struggling to obtain salvation under the condemnation of sin. Because the saved person takes the yoke together with the Lord in thanksgiving and faith, he can enjoy rest in his heart.

Therefore we must lay down our own wisdom and righteousness and receive the word of God with a heart like a little child's. When we believe the fact that Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, received that judgment on the Cross, and rose again, we escape the heavy burden of sin and obtain true rest. To live with that faith, learning the gentleness and lowliness of Jesus, is the life within the gospel of the water and the Spirit that walks bearing the Lord's yoke. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 11

[Question] 1. What is the central content spoken in Matthew chapter 11?

The central content of Matthew chapter 11 is that Jesus testified through His works that He is the promised Christ. Jesus also warned those who would not believe and repent of judgment, and promised salvation and true rest to those who come to Him.

1. The question of John the Baptist and Jesus' answer (verses 1–6)

John the Baptist, shut up in prison, sent his disciples to ask whether Jesus is the One who was to come, or whether they should wait for another. Jesus said to report to him the works of the sick being healed, the dead being raised, and the gospel being preached to the poor. The works Jesus did were themselves the testimony that He is the promised Christ.

2. Jesus testifies of John the Baptist (verses 7–15)

Jesus said that John the Baptist was not a swaying reed or a man in splendid clothing but one who is more than a prophet. He was the messenger who prepared the way of Jesus, and he was evaluated as the greatest among those born of women.

3. He rebukes the stubborn generation (verses 16–19)

The people of that day accused John the Baptist, who lived

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an ascetic life, of having a demon, and accused Jesus, who ate and drank with people, of being a glutton and a winebibber. They were stubborn people who would not receive the truth however it was delivered.

4. He warns the unrepentant cities of judgment (verses 20–24)

In Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum many of Jesus' mighty works appeared, but the people did not repent. Jesus warned that those who saw much of the word and many miracles and yet did not believe will receive a heavier judgment on the day of judgment than Tyre and Sidon and Sodom.

5. God, who reveals the truth of salvation (verses 25–27)

Jesus gave thanks that God had hidden the truth of salvation from those who consider themselves wise and prudent and revealed it to humble people like little children. He also said that only through the Son can one truly know the Father.

6. He invites those who labor and are heavy laden (verses 28–30)

Jesus invited all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him. Jesus is gentle and lowly in heart, and He gives true rest of soul to the person who takes His yoke and learns from Him.

Matthew chapter 11, therefore, teaches the fact that salvation and rest are given to the person who believes in and receives Jesus, but judgment follows the person who sees the clear word and mighty works and yet does not repent.

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[Question] 2. In Matthew 11:1, what was Jesus' purpose in departing from *"there"* after commanding His twelve disciples to preach the gospel?

The reason Jesus departed from *"there"* was to go about the various cities, teaching the word and preaching the gospel.

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities" (Matthew 11:1).

Jesus did not only send out the twelve disciples to evangelize; He Himself also kept going about the cities, doing the ministry of teaching and preaching.

[Question] 3. In Matthew 11:2, why was John the Baptist shut up in prison?

John the Baptist was seized and imprisoned because he rebuked Herod, saying that it was not right for him to have taken Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

Matthew 11:2 records the fact that John was in prison.

"And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples" (Matthew 11:2).

The concrete reason for his imprisonment appears in Matthew chapter 14.

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

John the Baptist did not fear Herod's power but pointed out his wrong, and for that he was imprisoned.

[Question] 4. In Matthew 11:3, what did John the Baptist send his disciples to ask Jesus?

John the Baptist sent his own disciples to ask Jesus, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"*

"And said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" (Matthew 11:3).

Here *"the Coming One"* means the Christ promised in the Old Testament, that is, the Messiah. John the Baptist did not ask this question because he himself doubted Jesus; he sent his disciples so that they would see Jesus' word and ministry for themselves, realize that He is the promised Messiah, and follow Jesus—he was handing them over to the Lord.

[Question] 5. In Matthew 11:4–5, what ministry of His did Jesus tell the disciples of John the Baptist to report to John?

Jesus told the disciples of John the Baptist to report to John what they had heard and seen. That is, He answered that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:4–5).

Rather than simply answering that He is the Christ, Jesus testified through the word He preached and the miracles He did that He is the promised Christ.

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[Question] 6. In which parts of the Scriptures is the content of the words listed in Matthew 11:5 prophesied?

The content of Matthew 11:5 reflects mainly the prophecies of the age of the Messiah recorded in the book of Isaiah.

1. The blind seeing, the deaf hearing, and the lame walking

It is recorded in Isaiah 35:5–6.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert" (Isaiah 35:5–6).

A prophecy about the blind and the deaf also appears in Isaiah 29:18.

"In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness" (Isaiah 29:18).

2. The dead being raised

It is recorded in Isaiah 26:19.

"Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19).

3. The gospel being preached to the poor

It is recorded in Isaiah 61:1.

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to

the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound" (Isaiah 61:1).

Matthew 11:5, therefore, is a word centered especially on Isaiah 35:5–6 and Isaiah 61:1. The cleansing of the lepers is not so much a direct quotation of one particular verse of Isaiah as a word added concerning the Messiah's power that Jesus actually exercised. That these things actually appeared through Jesus testifies that He is the Christ promised in the Old Testament.

[Question] 7. What meaning does the word *"offended"* in Matthew 11:6 carry in the original language?

The Greek word corresponding to *"offended"* in Matthew 11:6 is skandalizō (σκανδαλίζω).

"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.'" (Matthew 11:6).

This word originally means to cause to be caught in a trap, to cause to stumble, and it is used with the following meanings.

To stumble; to feel an obstacle in the heart; to take offense or reject; to fall away or fall from the faith.

The one *"who is not offended because of Me"* in this verse, therefore, means the person who does not reject Jesus or leave the faith even when Jesus' appearance and ministry differ from his own thoughts or expectations. To be offended here does not simply mean to make a mistake; it means to be caught in one's heart because of Jesus and to fail to believe in Him or to leave Him.

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[Question] 8. In Matthew 11:6, what kind of person does Jesus say is blessed?

Jesus said that the person who is not offended because of Him is blessed.

"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.'" (Matthew 11:6).

This means that the person who does not doubt or stumble even when Jesus' appearance and ministry differ from his expectations, but believes in and receives Jesus as the promised Christ, is blessed.

[Question] 9. In Matthew 11:7–9, what questions did Jesus ask the multitudes in order to testify of John the Baptist?

To testify of John the Baptist, Jesus asked the multitudes as follows.

"As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:7–9).

John the Baptist was not a person like a reed swaying according to people's reactions, nor was he a person who pursued a comfortable and splendid life. He was a prophet who boldly delivered the word of God, and because he was sent to prepare the way of Jesus, he was more than a prophet.

[Question] 10. What kind of person in faith does *"A reed shaken by the wind"* in Matthew 11:7 refer to?

"A reed shaken by the wind" means a person whose thoughts and attitude change easily according to his surroundings or people's reactions.

"As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?'" (Matthew 11:7).

John the Baptist was not a person who changed the word according to the threats of the powerful or people's evaluations. He boldly rebuked even Herod's wrong and firmly kept the mission he had received from God. As Jesus' question implies, John the Baptist was not a swaying man but a prophet who steadfastly delivered the truth of God.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 11:10, which word did Jesus quote to testify of the mission of John the Baptist?

To testify that John the Baptist is the prophet sent to prepare the way of Jesus, Jesus quoted the following word.

"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'" (Matthew 11:10).

This word quotes the prophecy of Malachi 3:1.

"'Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,' Says the LORD of

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hosts" (Malachi 3:1).

John the Baptist came before Jesus, preached repentance, and prepared the hearts of the people, thereby carrying out the mission of the messenger who prepares the way of the Christ. Jesus made clear that the prophecy of Malachi was fulfilled through John the Baptist.

[Question] 12. In Matthew 11:11, why did Jesus evaluate John the Baptist as the greatest among those born of women, that is, as the representative of mankind?

Jesus evaluated John the Baptist as the greatest among those born of women not because he was sinless or more perfect in character than others, but because the office and mission in the history of salvation that God entrusted to him were the greatest.

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament, sent to prepare the way of the Christ God had promised. He was born in the family of Zacharias the priest, and, inheriting the mission of the Elijah prophesied to come in the Old Testament, he cried out repentance to the people and testified that Jesus Christ had come.

The most important mission of John the Baptist was to baptize Jesus as the representative of mankind. Just as in the era of the Old Testament the high priest, representing the people, laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed

Israel's sins onto it, John the Baptist carried out the office of the last High Priest and baptized Jesus. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received passed on to His own body all the sins mankind commits from Adam until the last day of the world.

After baptizing Jesus, John the Baptist testified that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus bore the sin of the world He had taken on, hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and completed the salvation of mankind by rising from the dead. The ministry of John the Baptist, therefore, was indispensable for Jesus Christ to fulfill all righteousness with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In this sense John the Baptist stood at the turning point that closed the age of prophecy of the Old Testament and opened the fulfillment of salvation of the New Testament. He did not stop at prophesying the Christ to come; he baptized the Christ who had actually come, so that the sin of the world passed over to Him, and he testified directly that He is the Savior. That is why Jesus evaluated him as the greatest among those born of women and the representative of mankind.

But this does not mean that John the Baptist is another savior who accomplishes salvation together with Jesus. John the Baptist, too, as one sinner, had to believe in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, and the One who completed salvation is Jesus alone. Also, the word that even the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist does not speak of the size of human office. The standing and glory of the person who has received the remission of sins by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has been born again as God's child are greater than any office of this world.

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[Question] 13. In Matthew 11:11, why did Jesus say that no one born of women is greater than John the Baptist, and yet that in the kingdom of heaven a certain kind of person is greater than he?

Jesus evaluated John the Baptist as the greatest person among those born of women. But He said that in the kingdom of heaven even the least person is greater than John the Baptist.

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11).

John the Baptist was evaluated as great because he directly testified of the Christ whom the prophets of the Old Testament had prophesied and prepared His way. But the person who believes the gospel of salvation Jesus accomplished and has entered the kingdom of heaven is a person who has received a greater privilege than John the Baptist, in that he enjoys the grace of that completed salvation.

[Question] 14. In Matthew 11:12, what period in the history of salvation does *"from the days of John the Baptist until now"*—that is, the time when John the Baptist baptized Jesus—signify?

"From the days of John the Baptist until now" refers to the period from the time John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus and passed all the sins of the world on to Him, up to the time Jesus was speaking this word. In the history of salvation, this time is the turning point at which the promise of the Old Testament ended and the era of the gospel

of the New Testament began, in which that promise is actually fulfilled through Jesus Christ.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

John the Baptist was the last prophet of the Old Testament and the servant of God who carried out the mission of the Elijah promised to come in the Old Testament. He not only proclaimed repentance to the people and prepared the way of the Christ, but also took charge of the office of baptizing Jesus as the representative of mankind. The ministry of John the Baptist, therefore, was not a mere religious activity of baptizing people with water; it was the crucial ministry that actually accomplished the passing on of sin which the sacrificial system of the Old Testament had foreshadowed.

In the era of the Old Testament, the high priest, representing the people of Israel, laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering and passed the people's sins onto it. In the same way, John the Baptist, who took the role of the last earthly High Priest, baptized Jesus and passed all the sins of mankind onto His body. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received passed on to His own body, once and for all, the sins committed by all people from Adam until the last day of the world.

From this event onward, the prophecy of the Old Testament no longer remained only a promise to be fulfilled in the future. For the Christ God had promised to send had come, and through John the Baptist He had taken on the sin of the world. So the very next verse says, *"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John."* The promise of salvation the law and the prophets had prophesied actually began to be accomplished through the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of

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Jesus Christ.

Jesus bore the sin of the world He had taken on with His baptism, hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received all the judgment of sin. And by rising from the dead He overcame the power of sin, death, and Satan and became our eternal Savior. The ministry of John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus, was therefore the starting point of the saving work that would be completed with the Cross and the resurrection.

The word that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence does not mean that man seizes the kingdom of heaven by violence or by human merit. It means that as Jesus Christ took on the sin of the world with His baptism and removed that sin with the Cross and the resurrection, whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit can receive the remission of sins and enter the kingdom of heaven. Before, no one could come before God because of sin, but now, by the faith that believes in the righteousness of God, anyone can boldly receive the kingdom of heaven as his own.

The days of John the Baptist, therefore, are the boundary at which the age of the law and prophecy of the Old Testament passes over into the age of the fulfillment of salvation through Jesus Christ. John the Baptist baptized Jesus and passed the sin of the world on to Him, and Jesus took on that sin and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection; thus the era of the gospel began, in which sinners enter the kingdom of heaven by faith.

[Question] 15. Explain, concerning Matthew 11:12, those who take the kingdom of heaven by force.

The kingdom of heaven comes to be possessed by the violent—that is, by those who believe the gospel of the kingdom of heaven and receive it eagerly.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matthew 11:12).

Here *"suffers violence"* does not mean seizing the kingdom of heaven by force of arms or violence. It means the earnest and active attitude of faith that realizes one's sin and need of salvation and, whatever hindrance or difficulty there may be, believes the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit to obtain the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven, therefore, is taken not by those who are indifferent or who cling to their own righteousness, but by those who believe in Jesus Christ and eagerly receive God's salvation.

[Question] 16. In Matthew 11:13, what meaning does the ministry of John the Baptist have in the history of salvation?

The significance of John the Baptist in the history of salvation lies in that he closed the age of the prophecy of the law and the prophets, testified that the promised Christ had come, and moreover baptized Jesus and passed all the sins of mankind onto His body.

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Matthew 11:13).

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The law and the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied the Christ who was to come and the salvation He would accomplish. John the Baptist stood at the end of that prophecy, cried out repentance to the people, prepared the way of the Lord, and testified directly that the promised Christ had actually come.

But the ministry of John the Baptist did not stop at introducing Jesus. He baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received passed on to His own body the sins of all the people of the world, and so fulfilled all the righteousness of God. Afterward Jesus bore the sins He had taken on, hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and completed the salvation of sinners by rising from the dead. John the Baptist, therefore, holds the following position in the history of salvation.

• He is the last prophet of the age of Old Testament prophecy, represented by the law and the prophets.

• He is the messenger who prepared the way of the Christ promised in the Old Testament.

• He did not stop at prophesying the Christ to come, but directly testified of Jesus, who had already come.

• As the representative of mankind he baptized Jesus, performing the office by which all the sins of the world passed onto His body.

• He became the turning point connecting the promise of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of salvation through Jesus.

The words *"the law prophesied until John,"* therefore, mean that with John the Baptist the age of Old Testament prophecy and promise came to a close, and that through his baptizing of Jesus a new age opened in which the promised

salvation is actually fulfilled. The ministry of John the Baptist was a mission in the history of salvation indispensable for the beginning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished.

[Question] 17. In Matthew 11:14, what relation do the words *"he is Elijah who is to come"* have with the mission of John the Baptist?

Jesus made clear that John the Baptist is the person who carried out the role of the Elijah prophesied to come in the Old Testament.

"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14).

This word does not mean that John the Baptist is the same person as the Elijah of the Old Testament or that Elijah was born again. It means that John the Baptist came before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, turned the hearts of the people, and prepared the way of the Christ.

"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17).

John the Baptist, therefore, is the person who fulfilled the mission of the Elijah prophesied in Malachi 4:5—the role of preaching repentance to the people and preparing the way of the Lord.

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[Question] 18. In Matthew 11:14, with what heart and what faith must we hear the word of the Scriptures?

In Matthew 11:14 Jesus said, *"And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come."* The words *"willing to receive it"* here mean not merely hearing the word of God with the ear or understanding it as knowledge, but acknowledging that the word is the truth, receiving it with a glad heart, and obeying it.

When we hear the Scriptures, we must not insist that our own thoughts and existing religious knowledge are right. Even when the word of God sounds different from our thoughts or experience, we must first hear it with the heart that what God has said is right. We must not reject the word because it is hard to understand, or change the meaning of the word because it differs from the doctrine we have believed. We need a gentle and humble heart that lays down its own thoughts before God and tries to receive the written word as it is.

The Jews of that day were waiting for the Elijah promised in the Old Testament to appear. But the figure they expected and the figure of John the Baptist who actually appeared were different. John the Baptist was not a man clothed in soft garments dwelling in a palace but a man proclaiming repentance in the wilderness, and he sternly rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Because he was imprisoned for rebuking even Herod's sin, it was not easy for people to acknowledge him as the great servant sent by God.

But Jesus clearly revealed that John the Baptist is the Elijah prophesied to come in the Old Testament. This does not mean that the Elijah of the Old Testament was born again in the flesh; it means that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of

Elijah and carried out the mission of turning the people's hearts back to God and preparing the way of the Christ. The person who gladly receives the word of God, therefore, does not evaluate John the Baptist by his own thoughts, but acknowledges him, just as Jesus testified, as the servant sent by God.

The faith that hears the word of God rightly is not a faith that selects and receives only part of the word. If a person believes in Jesus and yet ignores the mission of John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus, he cannot fully understand by what method Jesus took on the sin of the world. God raised up John the Baptist as the representative of mankind, and he carried out the office of baptizing Jesus Christ so that all the sins of the world passed onto Jesus' body.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body. And He bore that sin, hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin, and became our Savior by rising from the dead. Receiving with the heart the word that John the Baptist is the Elijah who was to come, and that he participated in fulfilling the righteousness of God by baptizing Jesus, is therefore very important for believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly.

The faith that gladly receives the word does not stop at agreeing that the word is good. It is the faith that receives as one's own salvation the facts that God sent John the Baptist, that Jesus received baptism from him and took on the sin of the world, and that He completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. Such a person does not make his own good deeds or religious zeal the ground of salvation, but wholly trusts the righteousness God has accomplished with the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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Conversely, if a person puts his own thoughts and doctrines first and rejects the word of God, he may hear the word with his ears and yet fail to realize the saving will contained in it. So Jesus said in the very next verse, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* Having physical ears is not enough. We must have spiritual ears that open the heart before the word and want to believe and obey what God has spoken just as it is.

Therefore, when we hear the word of the Scriptures, we must hear it with the heart that it is the word of life and salvation God gives to me. We must lay down our own thoughts and learn humbly; we must not pick out and receive only what we understand, but believe that the whole of what God has said is the truth. And we must gladly receive that word into our hearts, make it our own faith, and obey it. This is the heart that willingly receives, spoken of in Matthew 11:14, and the true faith in which God delights.

[Question] 19. In Matthew 11:15, what was Jesus' intention in saying, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*"?

The words *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* were used with the intention not of simply hearing sound with the physical ear, but of realizing attentively the spiritual meaning of the words Jesus spoke and receiving them by faith.

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Jesus had just said that John the Baptist is the person who carried out the mission of the prophesied Elijah, and that through him the way of the Christ was prepared. This word, therefore, is an urging not to hear lightly the mission of John the Baptist and the mystery of the kingdom of heaven that has

come through Jesus, but to realize them in the heart and receive them.

That is, it means not to stop at hearing the word but to have the attitude that discerns its meaning, believes, and obeys.

[Question] 20. In Matthew 11:16–17, to the appearance of what children did Jesus liken that generation?

Jesus likened that generation to children sitting in the marketplace who show no response even when their companions play the flute or mourn.

"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament" (Matthew 11:16–17).

That they did not dance when the flute was played to make a joyful mood, and did not beat their breasts when there was mourning to make a sorrowful mood, means a stubborn and unresponsive attitude that will not receive the word however it is delivered.

The people of that day did not receive John the Baptist, who preached repentance in a strict and ascetic form, nor did they receive Jesus, who was with sinners and preached the gospel. With this parable Jesus pointed out their contradictory and stubborn attitude.

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[Question] 21. In Matthew 11:18–19, how did the Jews slander John the Baptist and Jesus respectively?

The Jews criticized John the Baptist and Jesus Christ with opposite charges.

Of John the Baptist they said that he had a demon, because he lived an ascetic life, neither eating nor drinking.

Of Jesus they said that He was a glutton and a winebibber and a friend of tax collectors and sinners, because He ate and drank with people.

"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children.'" (Matthew 11:18–19).

They rejected John the Baptist, who preached repentance ascetically, and they also rejected Jesus, who drew near to sinners and preached the gospel. This reveals that the problem was not the manner of delivery but their stubborn hearts, which would not receive the word of God.

[Question] 22. What does "in sackcloth and ashes" in Matthew 11:21 symbolize?

The expression "*in sackcloth and ashes*" symbolizes the attitude of deeply grieving over one's sins and humbly lowering oneself before God in repentance.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and

ashes" (Matthew 11:21).

Sackcloth, a rough and uncomfortable garment, expressed sorrow and mourning, and sitting in ashes or sprinkling ashes on oneself expressed lowering oneself and grieving over one's sins.

This verse, therefore, does not mean merely the outward act of wearing sackcloth and sitting in ashes; it means the sincere repentance of realizing one's sins, grieving deeply in the heart, and turning to God.

[Question] 23. In Matthew 11:20–22, what was the sin of Chorazin and Bethsaida, which received a rebuke of heavier judgment than Tyre and Sidon?

The perverseness of Chorazin and Bethsaida was that they saw with their own eyes Jesus doing many mighty works and yet did not repent.

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:20–22).

Tyre and Sidon were sinful Gentile cities, but Jesus said that if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had appeared there, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

But Chorazin and Bethsaida heard Jesus' words and saw many mighty works and still neither believed nor repented.

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Therefore, as much as the grace and evidence they received were great, their responsibility was also greater, and on the day of judgment they will receive a heavier judgment than Tyre and Sidon.

[Question] 24. In Matthew 11:23–24, with what words did Jesus rebuke Capernaum?

Because Capernaum saw many mighty works and did not repent, Jesus rebuked it, saying that it would not be exalted to heaven but would be brought down to Hades.

"And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you" (Matthew 11:23–24).

Capernaum was a city that experienced Jesus' word and many mighty works up close. But even after receiving such grace, they did not repent. Jesus said that if the mighty works done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, Sodom would not have been destroyed but would have remained.

Capernaum, therefore, as much as the grace and evidence it received were great, bore a greater responsibility, and on the day of judgment it will receive a sterner judgment than Sodom.

[Question] 25. In Matthew 11:25–26, how did Jesus give thanks before God the Father, who hid the things of the kingdom of heaven from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes?

Jesus prayed, *"I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."*

First, Jesus called God the Father *"Lord of heaven and earth."* This acknowledges that God the Father is the Owner of heaven and earth and the One who sovereignly determines to whom He will reveal the truth of salvation. Jesus acknowledged that the saving will God the Father had established is entirely right, and gave thanks.

Here *"the wise and prudent"* does not mean people rejected merely for having learning or wisdom. It refers to the proud, who boast of their knowledge, religious position, and righteousness, and who think they already know the word of God well. The people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum at that time saw the many mighty works Jesus did and yet did not repent. The religious leaders also prided themselves on knowing the Scriptures, but they did not receive Jesus as the Savior because He did not fit their own thoughts. From such people, who trust their own wisdom and righteousness, God hid the mystery of salvation.

On the other hand, 'babes' does not refer only to those without worldly knowledge or with immature thinking. It means those who lay down their own thoughts and righteousness before God and receive the word of God with a pure and humble heart. They believe the word of God as it is, as a little child relies on the words of his parents, and they

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admit that they cannot save themselves from sin and seek the grace of God.

To the person with such a childlike heart God reveals the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ. He makes him realize and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body with the baptism He received from John, bore that sin and died shedding His blood on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. This salvation is not discovered by human wisdom or good deeds; it is given to the person who humbles himself before the word of God and receives that word by faith.

When Jesus said, *"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight,"* it was a word of full agreement that this saving method of God the Father is righteous and good. Jesus rejoiced in and gave thanks for the Father's will, which revealed the truth of salvation not to those acknowledged as wise and high in the world but to those who admit their lack and receive the word of God purely.

Therefore, when we hear the word of God, we too must not put forward our own knowledge and experience, but receive it with a pure and humble heart like a little child. When we acknowledge that what God has said is right and believe that word with the heart, we come to realize the righteousness of God and the mystery of the kingdom of heaven contained in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

[Question] 26. In Matthew 11:27, who is the person of faith who can truly know the Father and the Son?

The One who truly knows Jesus Christ is God the Father, and those who truly know God the Father are the Son, Jesus

Christ, and those who have received revelation according to Jesus' will.

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27).

Man, therefore, cannot truly know Jesus and God by his own wisdom or knowledge alone. Jesus Christ reveals God the Father, and the person who receives that word of revelation by faith can know God. This means that the way of knowing God is given through the Son, Jesus Christ.

[Question] 27. Who are *"you who labor and are heavy laden"* in Matthew 11:28?

"You who labor and are heavy laden" refers to all people who are worn out carrying sin and guilt, the condemnation of the Law, and the pains of life.

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

This includes those who strive to become righteous with their own works and religious efforts but are exhausted because they cannot solve the problem of sin. Since man cannot by himself throw off the burden of sin or obtain true rest, Jesus invited all such people to Himself.

Therefore *"you who labor and are heavy laden"* means not only those who suffer physical and mental pain, but especially those who need salvation under the heavy burden of sin and condemnation.

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[Question] 28. In Matthew 11:28–30, through what did Jesus invite those who labor and are heavy laden?

Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,"* inviting to Himself all who labor under sin and the condemnation of the Law. And by saying, *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me,"* He invited them to believe and learn His word and the gospel of salvation He accomplished.

Here *"you who labor and are heavy laden"* does not mean only those who are physically weary or whose life is hard. Fundamentally it refers to those who have sin in their hearts and live in the condemnation of that sin and the fear of judgment. Man tries to become righteous by keeping God's Law, but he cannot keep the Law perfectly, and whenever he sins he is condemned by his own conscience and by the Law. Even if he repeats good deeds, asceticism, and religious works and offers prayers of repentance daily to wash away his sins, if sin remains in his heart he cannot obtain true rest.

Jesus did not tell such people to strive more and throw off the burden of sin by themselves. He said, *"Come to Me,"* telling them to come to Him, the Savior who can solve the problem of sin. Jesus is not One who came to oppress and condemn sinners, but the gentle and lowly God who came to take on the heavy burden of sin in their place and save them.

The true rest Jesus gives people is the remission of sins obtained through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus received all the sins of the world passed on to His own body. And He bore that sin, hung on the Cross, shed His blood and died, receiving the punishment of sin, and overcame the power of sin

and death by rising from the dead. Jesus invited us to believe this fact of salvation and receive the remission of all sins.

The words *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"* do not mean to take up again the heavy yoke of the Law and sin. They mean to learn and believe the word of salvation Jesus Christ accomplished, and, after receiving the remission of sins, to unite our hearts with the Lord's will and live a life of serving the gospel. The Lord's yoke is not a yoke that condemns and oppresses people; it is the yoke of grace by which the saved live preaching the gospel together with the Lord.

When Jesus said, *"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light,"* it does not mean that there is no difficulty at all in the life of serving the gospel. It means that the Lord, after entrusting that work to us, does not leave us to bear it alone; He is with us by the Holy Spirit and gives the strength, wisdom, and circumstances we need, and so it is easy and light. We do not do the Lord's work by our own ability; we pray to the Lord and serve the gospel receiving His help and blessing.

Jesus, therefore, invited those who carry the burden of sin through His word and through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Whoever lays down his own righteousness and religious efforts, comes to Jesus, and learns and believes the salvation He accomplished receives the remission of all sins and obtains the true rest of heart. And the person who has received the remission of sins comes to live taking the Lord's yoke, preaching the gospel of salvation together with the Lord to the souls still under the burden of sin. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

What poison has Satan the Devil spread among those who believe in Jesus

< Matthew 11:1-11 >

"Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.' As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

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This is a passage we have heard many times. But I have chosen this passage so that we may reflect on it once again. Today I would like to speak about the spiritual poison that Satan the Devil has spread among those who believe in Jesus.

The two spiritual poisons Satan the Devil has spread

If a person eats poison, he dies. Only if he takes the antidote can he live. Then how has Satan the Devil spread poison among those who believe in Jesus? Satan the Devil has spread two poisons among the Christians on this earth.

The first poison is this: the claim that if you believe the Nicene Creed, you are believing the orthodox faith. This is precisely the spiritual poison Satan the Devil has spread among Christian believers. It looks as if the faith of the apostles were recorded in it, but in reality a mixed religion was put into it.

The second poison is this: the claim that John the Baptist was a man who failed in his life of faith. Satan spread the poison that John the Baptist was nothing, that he was a man who failed in his own life of faith, a man who believed in Jesus and later doubted Him.

The poison of leaving Jesus' baptism out of the Nicene Creed

Let us first look at the first poison. Concerning the remitting of sins, the Nicene Creed slyly slipped in the idea that the Lord remits our sins daily if only we offer prayers of repentance. And it left out the baptism Jesus received from John. Therefore those

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who have fallen into this cannot be born again even though they believe in the Lord.

Jesus came to this earth to save us: He Himself received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross and died shedding His blood, and rose again from the dead, and so He has saved us. We receive the remission of sins by believing in this gospel of the water and the Spirit. But if John the Baptist is branded as a man who failed in faith, the ministry of John the Baptist does not enter our hearts. This is precisely the spiritual poison.

There is something amazing. If you read the Scriptures, it is plainly revealed that this is not true. But people do not read the Scriptures; they skim over them. They believe Christian doctrine first, regard the doctrine as the right answer, and only roughly check whether the Scriptures back up that doctrine, and so believe. Therefore a person who has once taken the poison, that is, one who disregards the ministry of John the Baptist, does not believe in the ministry by which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on my sins and yours. Because he does not believe in that ministry, he cannot believe that the Lord came to this earth, took on the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, carried that sin, died on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose again from the dead and saved us. He believes only in the Cross.

Believing only in the Cross does not make your sins disappear

People who believe in Jesus are truly foolish. I am not saying this about you. I mean that those who believe in ordinary Christianity are foolish. Going to church, believing in Jesus, and

believing only in the Cross does not make your sins disappear. Then, when your sins do not disappear, you ought to go to the senior pastor and demand that, since you believed everything just as he said and yet your sins have not disappeared, he should testify concretely how Jesus removed your sins, and that then you will believe.

You ought to demand this, but people do not. Even if you do demand it, the answer that comes back is that you need only believe unconditionally, and that it is because you have no faith. And with that they dismiss you as a person without faith, and that is the end of it.

Everyone, do we attend church only to serve Jesus unconditionally? If we believe in Jesus, what is the reason we believe? Is it not to be saved from our sins that we believe? They say Jesus saved us on the Cross, but if my sins do not disappear however much I believe, then I need to ask the senior pastor to teach me the word in more detail.

You must ask your pastor how your sins were removed

Then why do people not demand this of their pastors? If you believe just as the senior pastor delivers it to you and yet your sins do not disappear, something is wrong. The college entrance examination was held recently, and among the questions there were even some that had no answer. There are people who set examination questions like that. However hard you try, you cannot produce an answer to such questions. In such cases the fault lies with the one who set the question.

In the same way, if those who believe in Jesus still have sin even though they believe in the Cross of Jesus, all the church

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members ought to unite and speak to the senior pastor: that they believed just as he taught them and yet there is sin in their hearts; that if he presents to them concretely how their sins were removed, they will believe; that they believed just as the word says, that He removed their sins on the Cross, and yet their sins have not disappeared, so he must teach them more concretely. This is what they ought to demand.

When a person in our country goes to the hospital and says that he seems to have caught a certain disease, the doctors rather scold him. If he says that his lungs hurt and so he seems to have lung disease, the doctor says: who said it was lung disease? Do you diagnose your own disease? If you have come to a doctor, it is the doctor who diagnoses. A pastor ought to be the same.

Everyone, when someone becomes a pastor, he must clearly present to the church members how their sins were removed. If he has read the word, he must clearly present what this word is saying. Otherwise, if the church members believe in Jesus, attend church all their lives, and serve like that, and yet their sins do not disappear and they go to hell, how bitterly unjust a thing is that?

Everyone, even if you believe in Jesus, if there is sin in your heart, you go to hell without exception. It would rather be better not to have believed in Jesus, for then, when you encounter the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you have the opportunity to hear the gospel. Faith comes by hearing, and by hearing and believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit you can receive the remission of sins. But if you have met a person who preaches only the Cross, you hear that and your sins still do not disappear, and there is no answer any more. How foolish this is!

Why John sent his disciples to Jesus from prison

This passage here records the facts just as they were. Let us look together at why John the Baptist did this at that time. Let us read from chapter 11, verse 2 to verse 6.

"And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.'"

John the Baptist, shut up in prison, was hearing about the works Jesus was doing outside. He was hearing this news: this time He healed the sick; He opened the eyes of the blind. Because John the Baptist had rebuked the sin of Herod, the tetrarch of that region, Herod had his soldiers put him in prison. Would John the Baptist, imprisoned for pointing out the king's fault, be executed or not? He could well be executed. He had confronted the king directly, and in those days the king's word was the law. Therefore it was a settled matter that he would die.

So John, having heard in prison about the works of Christ, sent his disciples and asked Jesus, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* Then Jesus said: go and tell John the things which you hear and see, that the blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. Go and deliver this, He said.

Then why did John send his own disciples to Jesus, and why did Jesus tell John's disciples the ministry He had done and tell them to go and deliver it? There was a purpose on both sides in

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this. John the Baptist's purpose was this. He knew that in a little while he would be put to death. So he wanted his disciples to know, once he died, the fact that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of mankind who came as the Lamb of God. If he died, his disciples would scatter in every direction since their teacher was gone, and so he intended to hand his disciples over to Jesus. John the Baptist knew the fact that Jesus had taken on the sin of the world.

How did he know? Because he himself had given baptism to Jesus. He was arrested a good while after giving the baptism. Therefore, because he knew the fact that he was going to die, he told his disciples to go to Jesus and ask, in order to hand them over. When John the Baptist's disciples went to Jesus and heard what Jesus said, to whom would they go once their teacher died? They would go to Jesus.

So John sent his disciples with that heart, to confirm it; and when John's disciples asked, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* Jesus said, look at the ministry I have done. The blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them—tell him this, He said. Jesus spoke of His own ministry. He was testifying that He is the Messiah, the Savior. And John's disciples departed. And after that, Jesus speaks to the multitudes.

Let us read Matthew chapter 11, verses 7 to 9.

"As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet."

John the Baptist's disciples came and asked their question,

Jesus answered them, and John's disciples departed. After that, Jesus spoke just as things were to the many people who were following Him. Now that John's disciples had come and gone, He spoke about John the Baptist.

He asks, what did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? Then what did you go out to see, He says—a man clothed in soft garments? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. For those who live in royal palaces wear very splendid and soft clothes. Then why did you go out, He asks. The people had gone out into the wilderness to see John the Baptist. John was in the wilderness, clothed in camel's hair, crying out.

People went out and looked, wondering whether he might be a prophet God had sent. And John said, repent of your sins, and wash away your sins, and receive baptism. The baptism he gave to the people was given so that they would wash away their sins, and the baptism John gave to Jesus was given to pass the sin of this world on to Jesus.

One more than a prophet, the greatest among those born of women

Jesus testified about John the Baptist, *"What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9)*. He is more than all the prophets of the Old Testament. Why is that so? Because he is the representative of mankind. Let us read verse 10 together.

"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'"

He said this quoting the Book of Malachi in the Old

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Testament. And in verse 11 He says this.

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

He is the foremost among those born of women. To put it in a single word, he is the representative of mankind. This word, that among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist, is not my word but the word Jesus Himself spoke.

Jesus said that John the Baptist is greater than the prophet Isaiah of the Old Testament, than the prophet Jeremiah, than the prophet Ezekiel, than the prophet Daniel, and even than Moses. And He says that he is the greatest among those born of women. Everyone, all people have been born as the descendants of Adam, and among them the greatest is John the Baptist. That is, he is the representative of mankind.

But He says that he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. In the born-again world, John the Baptist is not so great a one. Jesus called John the Baptist a great one. Because God the Father raised up John the Baptist as the representative of mankind, Jesus took on the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from him. If we look at Matthew 3:13–17, saying, *"Thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*, Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, and He was carrying out His ministry.

The ministry by which John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed on the sin of the world

And John the Baptist was shut in prison, facing his martyrdom. To hand his disciples over to Jesus, he told them to

go and ask Him, *"Are You the Coming One?"* That is, he meant for them to go directly to Jesus, ask Him, hear His word, and have the faith that believes. Having handed them over like that, in a little while John the Baptist suffers martyrdom. He is beheaded inside the prison. And Jesus testifies about the ministry of John the Baptist in verses 12 and 13 like this.

"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). All the words of the Law and all the words of the Prophets of the Old Testament are until John.

All the words of the Old Testament point to the fact that John the Baptist did the work of giving baptism to Jesus, the Savior of mankind, and passing the sin of the world on to Him. Therefore in verse 14 He says, *"If you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come."* John the Baptist did the work of passing the sins of mankind on to Jesus. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took over the sins of mankind, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. And yet, by driving John the Baptist, who was raised up as the representative of mankind, into a corner as a turncoat of the faith, as a man without faith, as a man who failed in faith, and by disparaging him in that way, they are feeding people spiritual poison.

Everyone, once you have taken spiritual poison, you cannot get out of it until someone brings you the antidote. In A.D. 325, in the region of Nicaea, a religious council presided over by the Roman emperor was held. Many religious scholars gathered and made the Nicene Creed. The Nicene Creed made at that time went through several revisions by the later kings of Rome and hardened into what is called the Apostles' Creed, held to be the faith of the apostles. And it became a spiritual poison, and

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countless people came to be put to death.

Because it recorded only that Jesus suffered under Pilate and died on the Cross, and left out the baptism Jesus received from John, people have no interest in Jesus' baptism. If you ask why Jesus received baptism in the passage of Matthew 3:13–17, opinions are divided. Some say He received it out of humility, and some say He received baptism in order to wash away our sins, to die on the Cross and rise again and become our Savior.

People leave out the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John. Since the baptism Jesus received from John was left out of the Apostles' Creed, those who believe the doctrine of the Apostles' Creed do not know Jesus' baptism. Therefore they do not know the fact that John the Baptist passed their sins on to Jesus and that He so washed them away, and they cannot have their sins washed away by faith. How frightening a thing this is!

And after that, now the modern theologians and many pastors disregard the ministry of John the Baptist. If they disregard the ministry of John the Baptist, it becomes a great problem, because it is connected with Jesus' baptism. John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed on all the sins of the world, and Jesus took over the sin of the world and was nailed to the Cross and died; and they have put in a spiritual poison that keeps people from knowing that work of passing our sins onto the body of Jesus.

Therefore, because those who believe in Jesus today have eaten this wicked poison, they fail to receive the remission of sins even though they believe in Jesus, and they are going to hell. Jesus said plainly: from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence.

"The kingdom of heaven suffers violence"

Because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, the sin of the world passed over to Jesus. Then all the people of this world are without sin. Even now a certain country has started a war, and countless people are dying. It seems that more than a thousand are dying in a single day. The sin of the person who started that war also passed to Jesus when Jesus received baptism from John, even before that man was born. It has passed to Jesus, and yet people do not know that fact. That country, too, is a country that believes in Jesus. And yet the people do not know.

What does it mean that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence? It means that to possess heaven, people break down the sentry by strength, by force of arms, and seize it and enter heaven. If heaven is there and a sentry stands before it, then from the days of John the Baptist people enter heaven by laying violent hold of it, by seizing it.

It is because John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus. "You give Me baptism; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him." When John gave baptism to Jesus, all the sins of the world passed over to Jesus, and the gate of heaven was opened, and the Spirit descended like a dove, and He said, this is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

It means that Jesus took over the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. That is what this is saying. If John the Baptist had not given baptism to Jesus and passed on the sins of mankind, if Jesus had not taken over the sins of mankind through John the Baptist, our sins would still be with us. Because John the Baptist laid his hands on Jesus and passed the sins on, our sins passed over to Jesus. Because God raised up one man, and by the principle of representation John

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the Baptist passed on the sins of mankind in our stead, our sins passed over to Jesus through the ministry of John the Baptist.

A preacher must unfold and testify to the meaning of the word of God

If you have read this word, that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, it is right to unfold accurately what this word is saying, to prove it and to present it. Should one just pass over it and say that we remove sins by offering prayers of repentance? Only when the word of the Scriptures is testified to do the hearers come to know. What have you come here and sat down for?

Are you sitting here to serve God? Serving God is good, too. Are you sitting here to worship? Worshiping is good, too. But why is there one who preaches, and why do we listen to the sermon? God has set up the preacher to do the work of unfolding and testifying to the meaning of the word of God. He has not set him up here to boast about himself. When one stands here, everything private is over.

You are sitting before God, and I too am standing before God and preaching. There is nothing private. Testifying to what God is saying within the passage that has been read is the duty of the one who preaches. And those who hear the sermon have come out to church and are sitting there to hear the word. You and I know it to be so.

He said that all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. Before the birth of Jesus came in the Gospel of Matthew, the Old Testament had made its promises this thick: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Writings contain the life of faith lived in daily life. The Old Testament, which binds these three

into one, contains commands and promises this thick. It prophesied the things that were to come.

The promise is this: that Jesus would come to this earth as the Lamb of God, take on our sins through the baptism He received from John, be nailed to the Cross and sacrificed in our place, die and rise again, and become the Savior of you and me. The Old Testament promised this.

Then, coming to the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 1, saying, the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham and of David, Jesus Christ is born borrowing the body of Mary. It came to pass just as all the prophets of the Old Testament had prophesied. It says, *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel" (Matthew 1:23)*. Translated, this means, God with us.

Jesus was born into this world. Six months before Jesus was born, John the Baptist was born. And when Jesus turned thirty, He received baptism from John the Baptist. Thus He took over the sins of mankind. The reason Jesus received baptism was to take over the sins of mankind, the sins of all people, once and for all.

We need only believe exactly as it appears in the word. In Matthew chapter 11, John sent his own disciples to Jesus and told them to ask, *"Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?"* John's disciples went to Jesus and asked. Then Jesus told them to go to their teacher and report: *"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:5)*. So they went and delivered it just so. Then a little later John the Baptist is beheaded and dies. And from among John's disciples come those who became Jesus' disciples.

The Scriptures record things with utter frankness. For

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example, in the nation of Israel there were the twelve sons of Jacob. Judah became the ancestor of the tribe associated with the promise of kingship, and in later generations, kings, including David, arose from among his descendants.

If you look at the family history of the man Judah, Judah commits sin. Judah does wrong and takes his own daughter-in-law. Those who keep sheep shear their sheep's wool once a year and sell it; that, so to speak, is their harvest. Judah went up to shear his sheep, and by the roadside there was one whose appearance was like a harlot's. So Judah gave that woman payment and committed sin. Judah had gone up to shear wool, so he had gone without money. When the woman asked him to give her payment if he would be with her, he gave her his signet and his staff as a pledge instead of money.

But later he heard that his own daughter-in-law was with child. In the Old Testament, if a woman conceived by committing harlotry with another man, she had to be stoned to death. When Judah heard the news, he told them to bring his daughter-in-law out and burn her; and as the woman was being brought out, she said to her father-in-law, by the man to whom these things belong I am with child, and she brought out his signet and cord and staff. Then Judah, the father-in-law, had nothing to say.

Judah's first son had married Tamar and lived with her, but he was wicked before God, and the LORD killed him. Judah told his second son Onan to go in to his brother's wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother, to raise up seed for his brother; but he did evil before the LORD, and the second son died too. The custom of Israel was that if the first son married and lived with his wife and then died, the second son had to live with the eldest daughter-in-law. But the second son also died living with Tamar. He ought then to have given his third son to Tamar, but

the third son was still young, and fearing that if he gave him, he too might die, he had not given him to Tamar. And now, when Tamar was about to be put to death, she held out her father-in-law's signet and staff.

What I am trying to say now is this. People would cover all such things up, but the Scriptures record everything that happened with utter frankness. And nevertheless Judah is of the royal line. It comes to pass just as God has ordained. Jesus, too, was born of the family of Judah. He was born of the royal line. It means that the King of the kingdom of heaven was born through the royal line of this earth.

"He is Elijah who is to come"

"All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come," He said. This is what was promised in the Book of Malachi.

He said, before the day of wrath comes upon this world, I will send My servant Elijah, and I will punish those who do not listen to Elijah's words. Then who is Elijah? Jesus says that he is John the Baptist. But now those who believe in Jesus have taken poison spiritually concerning John the Baptist. Because John the Baptist has been driven into a corner as one who doubted that Jesus is the Messiah, people utterly disregard the ministry of John the Baptist. And by doing so, they come not to believe even in the ministry of Jesus' baptism, by which Jesus took on the sins of mankind through John the Baptist. How frightening a thing this is!

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Only when we know and believe just as it appears in the Scriptures are we not offended

The word we have read today needs no added interpretation of mine. We need only testify to the facts just as they are. Jesus said that John the Baptist is the greatest of all the prophets of the Old Testament and the greatest among those born of women, that is, the representative of mankind. He said, I received baptism from the representative of mankind and took on the sins of mankind. Therefore I have become the Savior of mankind, and John the Baptist became the one who passed the sin of the world on to Jesus.

Therefore this is telling us not to disregard the ministry of John the Baptist, the ministry he came to this earth and carried out.

If we do not rightly know and believe the ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus, we come to be offended. Even though we believe in Jesus, we go to hell. It is falling off a cliff to our death. When we believe in Jesus, we must know exactly as it appears in the Scriptures and believe exactly so. There is nothing here to attach a commentary to. Because the Scriptures are the truth, there is no other commentary to attach. And if anything is in doubt, ask.

Whenever I hold a Bible study, I always have a time for receiving questions. I tell people to ask if anything is in doubt. Then I speak to that question. That is how faith grows. Everyone, it says, *"You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32)*. Everyone, you must know the truth. The word truth means true words. He was saying, know what is true, and what is true will make you free.

Is it not true that Jesus took over our sins through the baptism He received from John and saved us from sin? This is the truth.

Because we have received the remission of sins by believing in Jesus, we can enter the kingdom of heaven. Heaven is entered by faith. To lay violent hold of it means this: we are lacking and weak and do wrong, and of ourselves we cannot enter there; but because Jesus took over our sins through the baptism He received from John, and was judged in our place by dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and died for us, and rose again to save us, we can enter the kingdom of heaven by the faith that believes that this Jesus is our Savior. The Lord has made us into such people, and He has given us such a blessing. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Wisdom is justified by her deeds

< Matthew 11:16-19 >

"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children."

People who disregard John the Baptist

The Lord testified how high a one John the Baptist is. John the Baptist was the representative of mankind. He was the one who fulfilled the role of the last priest marking the close of the Old Testament. He was also the one who gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus. The Lord testified about John the Baptist in that way.

But the Pharisees and the religious leaders of that day despised John the Baptist. It is the same with many people inside Christianity today. If you speak about John the Baptist, they will not even listen or speak of it. They unconditionally call John the Baptist a failure in faith. They call him a turncoat.

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If John the Baptist were a turncoat, would Jesus have received baptism from him?

If John the Baptist were a turncoat, would Jesus have praised him? If John the Baptist were a turncoat, would Jesus have received baptism from him and taken over all the sins of mankind? If John the Baptist were not the greatest among those born of women, would Jesus have said that he is more than all the prophets of the Old Testament? That makes no sense.

So Jesus spoke with an aching heart: *"But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, And you did not dance; We mourned to you, And you did not lament'" (Matthew 11:16–17).*

Speaking of the Pharisees and the religious leaders, Jesus said this: *"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children" (Matthew 11:18–19).*

In this passage, from verse 16 to the middle of verse 19, the content is all negative. When John the Baptist neither ate nor drank in the wilderness, people slandered him, saying that he had a demon. When Jesus came and mingled with the tax collectors and sinners and lacking people, eating with them and also sharing the word of God, people slandered Him, calling Him a friend of sinners. So Jesus spoke one last word: *"Wisdom is justified by her children."*

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What Jesus accomplished is wisdom itself

Knowledge and wisdom are different things. Knowledge is knowing. Wisdom is the ability to use what one knows and accomplish a work. When we do some work, there are times when many difficulties block the way. There are times when other people stand in the way of what we may rightly do. The wise person is the one who, at such times, handles the matter rightly, recovers our rights, and accomplishes that work.

Therefore the word *"Wisdom is justified by her children" (Matthew 11:19)* means that the work Jesus came to this earth and did is wisdom itself. Though people slandered Jesus, though they slandered John the Baptist as one who had stumbled, though they played the flute and mourned and people did not gather, Jesus came to this earth and accomplished the work of saving every sinner from sin. And so He granted the blessing of saving those who believe from sin.

Everyone, how did Jesus accomplish that work? We know that Jesus is the Savior of mankind, and we know that He is the Savior of sinners. But we must know by what method Jesus made every sinner sinless, saved them from judgment, washed the sin from their hearts, and gave them the qualification to become God's people and be brought into the kingdom of heaven. The One who accomplished that work on this earth is Jesus.

How did Jesus remove my sins and yours? God, in His wisdom, sent one man, John, the representative of mankind, to this earth. He raised him up as the greatest among those born of women, as the representative of mankind. Jesus received baptism from that John the Baptist. Through that baptism He took over the sins of mankind onto His own body. Because He had taken over the sins, He was nailed to the Cross and died.

And He rose again from the dead. By the baptism Jesus received from John, by His death on the Cross, and by His resurrection, He removed perfectly the sins of those who were bound by sin and dying. This is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus accomplished this work altogether justly.

That is why Jesus said on the Cross, *"It is finished,"* and died. He died and rose again, and went up into heaven saying that He would come again. And He had that work recorded in the Scriptures. Therefore those who believe in Jesus as their own Savior have believed, realizing, so this is how Jesus removed my sins, and they have received the remission of sins. Jesus removed our sins in that way. That is precisely the wisdom of God.

God who raised up John the Baptist as the High Priest

God, in removing our sins, raised up one man as the representative of mankind. He had him born into the family of the high priest so that he could fulfill the role of the High Priest of mankind. John's father Zacharias was a man who was carrying out the duties of the high priest six months before Jesus was born.

When Zacharias went into the sanctuary and was performing the duties of the high priest, an angel appeared. The angel told him that he would give him a son. He told him to call his name John. He said that this son would fulfill a role like Elijah's, leading God's people to God. And so John the Baptist was born as the son of Zacharias.

In this way John the Baptist became the High Priest of mankind. His father was a high priest. A high priest must retire when he grows old. Then his son, when he turns thirty, can

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receive the laying on of hands and be inaugurated as high priest. John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus when he turned thirty. God the Father had appointed John the Baptist as the representative of mankind, as the last High Priest.

John the Baptist, as the High Priest of mankind, as the greatest among those born of women, as the representative greater than all the prophets of the Old Testament, gave baptism to Jesus. Jesus, by receiving baptism from the representative of mankind, carried out the ministry of the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, taking over all the sins of mankind. God had so ordained it, and had John the Baptist born so. When Jesus turned thirty, He received baptism from him and took on the sins of mankind. Because He had taken on the sins, He was nailed to the Cross and put to death, and He rose from the dead and accomplished the salvation of mankind in full. This is the wisdom of God that saved mankind from sin.

The salvation He accomplished once and for all

God did not merely say, “I will save you.” Man sins every day until the day he dies. God prepared in advance the way to take over those sins at one time through the baptism received from John, to be judged at one time by being nailed to the Cross and dying, and to die once and rise again and save us. If He had not established such a method and saved us, how could He save us?

We commit sin every day; must the Lord then receive baptism and hang on the Cross each time? Is it only one or two people? They say the population of the world now exceeds eight billion. Do those people sin only once? They sin, and a little later they sin again, and sin again. But Jesus is the King of wisdom.

Then how would He save man from sin? Jesus came to this earth once and for all. He sent John the Baptist first, and when John the Baptist turned thirty, the age at which he could fulfill the duty of the high priest, He entrusted that work to him by the Holy Spirit. Jesus went to him, received baptism, and took on the sins. And He hung on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead, and became our Savior. In this way God, in His wisdom, knew the method to resolve this matter, and by that method He accomplished it all. That is the wisdom of God.

Therefore He said, *"Wisdom is justified by her children" (Matthew 11:19)*. Whether you slander Me or not, I am the friend of sinners; though people slander Me, I am justified by the work I have done—that is what He was saying. We believe that the work Jesus did is right. Everyone, do you believe so?

Did Jesus work foolishly? Jesus did not do the work of taking on our sins every day. Sin is not something to be taken on daily. Jesus took it on once and for all when He received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Everyone, do you want to do a vexing task every day, or do you want to finish it at one time? A wise and intelligent person would want to accomplish it at one time. In the same way, Jesus also came to this earth and did so, upholding the will of the Father. This is the wisdom of Jesus. Jesus is our Savior.

Jesus is our refuge

In this world there are people who prepare underground bunkers against a great disaster. When a great war breaks out, they select people in advance and send them inside. They prepare so that after the disaster has passed, the people can come out, establish the nation again, and live. The intention is to take

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refuge inside when a great disaster strikes, and to come out and live when the disaster is over.

Everyone, this world is now a world of destruction. The whole earth is now so hot that fires break out and many lives are dying. In place after place, great rains pour down all at once.

Disaster is now coming upon the whole world. Food is becoming scarce. The air of war is stirring. Politically, too, leaders are appearing who say that as long as their own country lives well, it does not matter whether other countries perish or not. Believers and unbelievers alike, everyone now feels with their skin that this is the last time.

If it is the end, should not everyone who lives on this earth enter into the refuge? Only then can they live. Can we live on just as we are? We, too, thinking that such things will come upon us, have built our building sturdily.

Mankind is now committing much sin. The person who has sin goes to hell. When destruction comes upon this world, everyone dies. It is the appointed order that man is born once and dies once, and after that comes the judgment. If a person lives and dies with sin, he simply goes to hell and is judged. Do you say there is no judgment? The judgment most certainly exists.

God who keeps us by the wisdom of creation

Do you say this world evolved by chance and came to be by itself? If it had been made by itself, it would fall apart by itself. The sun and the earth are far apart. But they say that if the sun came even a little closer to the earth, everything on earth would burn to death. By a very minute difference the earth has spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and man lives on.

By the gravity of the moon the seawater surges up, and the ebb and flow of the tides move. Could such things have come about by themselves, by some chance, as in the theory of evolution? God, with precise wisdom, set the earth in the empty space and made it circle around the sun. And yet He kept us from growing dizzy, and He kept the eardrums of our ears from bursting. They say the sound of this earth rotating is as enormous as the sound of a bomb exploding. But God has kept us from hearing so great a sound. And so we communicate with one another very quietly and live.

If all this had come about by way of evolution, a change would arise someday. Then we would die. If things evolved by themselves, should not a person suddenly become some other beast one day? But a man is a man until he dies, and a man forever. This is what God has done. Therefore we must receive Jesus. Jesus becomes our bunker. Jesus becomes our refuge. Jesus is our refuge. He came to this earth to save us, and He has saved us.

Noah's ark and the wisdom of the Lord

Everyone, destruction is coming upon this earth—can we sit still? Long ago there was Noah's ark. Noah proclaimed to the people that this world would suffer destruction. He said that God would judge this world with water. He said that whoever came into the boat he was building would live. He proclaimed that water would pour down and a flood would come and all would die, so come into the boat. But no one believed. Only Noah's family, eight souls, went into the boat. Only the beasts God had appointed went in with them, and were protected, and lived.

This is the wisdom of the Lord. The Lord does not have

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knowledge only. The Lord made man able to live in this immense world. He made us unable to hear sounds that are too great, and able to hear just the right sounds and communicate with one another. He completed that with His power. How amazing it is!

The wisdom of the Lord is power. Only with power, only with understanding, can such work be accomplished. Without wisdom and without power, no matter can be resolved. When we had fallen into sin, the Lord had the power to save us from sin. And He planned that power with His wisdom. He determined when John the Baptist would be born, and when Jesus would be born. When they turned thirty, He had them meet, the one giving baptism and the other receiving it. He had Jesus take over the sins, carry the sin of the world and be nailed to the Cross, rise again and go up into the kingdom of heaven, and come again to take us. He had the power to take us into His kingdom when destruction comes upon the world, and He was the One able to accomplish all that work. How amazing a thing this is!

We, too, are now worshiping in this place. This place was not originally our land. We had no money. So we prayed: "Jesus, give this land to us; let us be able to use it." God opened the way. With only a small amount of money we resolved the complicated matters, transferred the registration, and made this land ours. And so we have come to work here to our heart's content and serve the Lord. That is precisely power and wisdom.

A person must have learning, and must have knowledge. But he must also have wisdom. How can we, without holding out our hand to others, serve God well, do the work that pleases God, live on earth without lack, and become people who give to many others? That is wisdom. Therefore we must ask God for wisdom, ask for blessing, and ask for power.

We who enter the bunker of salvation by faith

By faith we come to enter the bunker the Lord has prepared. Though destruction comes upon this world, there is nothing to worry about. The Lord came to this earth and fulfilled all righteousness by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. Thus He took on all sins, received all the judgment, and saved us. The person who believes this, when he has finished all the work the Lord entrusted to him in this world, is lifted up before the Lord when the Lord calls. And he enters the kingdom the Lord has prepared, and lives there.

Then how has the Lord saved us? Matthew 11:12 says, *"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force."* Jesus becomes our refuge, and by believing in that Jesus we can enter the kingdom of heaven. From the time John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus, our sins were passed on to Jesus. Jesus took over those sins and was nailed to the Cross. He died and rose again and saved us.

We have received the remission of sins by believing in the role of John the Baptist, the role of the baptism Jesus received, and the power of His death on the Cross and of His resurrection. Thus we have become people who can go to the kingdom of heaven. Therefore we must know well the role of John the Baptist. We must not disregard the role of John the Baptist.

Jesus came to this earth, received baptism and took on the sins of mankind, hung on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and became our Savior. Yet people disregard and despise this. Jesus made a refuge for the time when sinners suffer destruction. Whoever enters that refuge is protected, receives salvation, and keeps his life. It is the grace and blessing of salvation by which we rise again and live forever. But there are those who refuse

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that blessing. Such people despise the Lord with a few words, but they will be despised by the Lord forever. They will enter the burning hell and suffer forever. That is the justice of God.

People today must look into the wisdom of God and receive it with thanksgiving. God, in His wisdom, ordained that John the Baptist would give baptism to Jesus. Jesus intended to take over the sins of mankind from John the Baptist. We must look into that wisdom and receive God's power and wisdom with thanksgiving. God intended to pass the sins of mankind onto the body of Jesus through John the Baptist, and He did pass them on. Jesus took over the sin of the world, died on the Cross shedding His blood, rose from the dead, and became our Savior.

The false teaching that one is sanctified by prayers of repentance

God did it that way because He wanted to save you and me. Is that not to your liking? Instead, should He remove your sins each time you offer prayers of repentance every day? If, whenever we sin and offer a prayer of repentance, Jesus must each time take over the sin and die on the Cross and come down again, then Jesus would have to repeat endlessly, faster than lightning, going up and coming down.

Jesus did not do that. To accomplish it once and for all, He raised up one man as the representative of mankind. He received baptism from him and took over our sins, washed our sins away, received the judgment of our sins, died and rose again, and saved us. He is the One who has such power. We must believe in that mighty Jesus, in His wisdom, and in the salvation He has given.

We receive salvation by faith. There is no other way than for man, who like a mayfly has no wisdom, no power, and no

eternity, to receive by faith the almighty God of great wisdom and great power, and so be saved. Yet some people doubt this salvation. God has given salvation freely, and they doubt: is this real or is it fake? Is there not some trick in it? People may be doubted, but there is no need to doubt God. God is the One we are to believe. It is like a man seized with the delusion of jealousy who, even when his wife has merely stepped out for a while, presses her endlessly about where she has been, until in the end he shatters his own family. Only when spouses look after each other where they fall short and solve their problems together can they live together a whole lifetime. If one doubts and presses the other endlessly like that, they cannot live together.

Jesus saved us by His own power, and yet there are people who quibble over every little thing, as if something were not to their liking. They complain: why did You remove the sins once and for all, instead of removing them each time we offer prayers of repentance? Then who taught them so? They say their denomination taught them. Then who is the head of their denomination? Those who founded the denomination, the president of the general assembly, and the theological scholars. Then will you believe the theological leaders, or will you believe Jesus? There are people who say, I believe the theologians rather than Jesus. They say the theologians are trustworthy and receive respect from all the people of the world.

Then the Lord would speak like this: I remove your sins once and for all; I do not remove them daily. I too am One with much work to do. I must keep this universe and all things running well and keep them from being destroyed. Must I become your appendage and remove your sins each time you sin daily and offer prayers of repentance? I do not do so. I am not such a one. I am the Almighty. I am the One who can do all things if I but

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purpose it. God speaks so.

The theologians say that one must offer prayers of repentance and be sanctified to go to heaven. But Jesus told us until when the word of prophecy of the Old Testament continues. He said that the age of the prophecy of the Old Testament was until John the Baptist was born into this world, until Jesus was born into this world. That age was the age in which God promised to send Jesus and save us once and for all. He said that from the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. From the time Jesus and John the Baptist were born, the age of the Old Testament had passed.

We who live in the age of the New Testament

Now the age has come in which the words of prophecy of the Old Testament are fulfilled. John the Baptist and Jesus fulfilled all the words of the Old Testament. John the Baptist gave baptism, and Jesus received baptism. Jesus died on the Cross and rose from the dead and accomplished it all. He removed sin altogether.

That the age of the New Testament has come means that Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on all the sins of mankind, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and became our Savior. This is precisely what it means that the age of the New Testament has come. We are living in the age of the New Testament.

Living in the age of the New Testament, we sin until the day we die. Then who passed on to Jesus the sins we commit until we die? John the Baptist passed them on. John the Baptist gave baptism to Jesus and passed our sin of the world on to Jesus. Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on the sin

of the world. Thus Jesus, as the wise One, took on the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John. Because He had taken over our sins, He was the One who could die on the Cross and rise again and save us.

We have received the remission of sins by believing in the power of Jesus Christ who became the Savior of mankind, by believing in His love, by believing that He became our Savior. Now we must love one another and live happily, and when the Lord comes, we must go to the Lord's kingdom. The Lord has made us such happy people. Yet even now there are many who are deceived by religious swindlers who press them without ceasing to squeeze out offerings, and who go to hell.

The Lord did not want even one person to go to hell. Therefore He received baptism from John the Baptist and took over all the sins of the world. He received all the judgment as well, died and rose again, and became our Savior. We have received the remission of sins by believing in that Jesus who became our Savior and the bunker of our salvation. Now we must do righteous works by faith and live happily until we meet the Lord.

Who says that John the Baptist lost his faith and stumbled? Who says he became a turncoat? Do the theologians say so? They are the ones who, without reading the Scriptures, rejected John the Baptist in order to fit him into their own doctrines. Through such things they made themselves religious leaders, and they sought to receive much offering money from the people and enjoy wealth and glory. It was in order not to lose those things that they rejected John the Baptist and called him a turncoat.

Is John the Baptist a turncoat? John the Baptist was one who was faithful to Jesus. He was the first to be martyred for Jesus in the age of the New Testament. He did all his work and left it

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finished. He pointed out people's sins and proclaimed that they should believe in Jesus, and he was put to death, pushed by the force of political power.

But though he died, he speaks to us. He is one who triumphed by faith, one who succeeded. He has become one held in the bosom of our Lord. Everyone, do not disregard Jesus who became the bunker of our salvation, and the role of John the Baptist who assisted that work. Do not thereby become people who are disregarded by God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Come to Jesus and find true rest

< Matthew 11:20-30 >

"Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you.' At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'"

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Jesus came to this earth, taught many words, and performed many mighty works. He healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. These signs showed that Jesus is the Savior sent by God and that the kingdom of God had drawn near.

In the latter half of Matthew chapter 11, a stern rebuke and a warm invitation appear together. To the cities that do not repent He warns of judgment, but those who labor and are heavy laden He calls to come to the Lord and rest. Toward the pride that rejects the truth He is unbending, but to the one who admits his sin and weakness and comes to Him, He gives the rest of salvation, gently and lowly.

Those who did not turn back even before many mighty works

Jesus rebuked the cities in which His mighty works had been done most abundantly, because they did not repent. These people were not people who had never heard the news of Jesus. They were people who had experienced the Lord's words and signs abundantly, from the nearest place.

Seeing miracles does not in itself guarantee faith. A person can see an amazing thing and be moved for a moment, but unless he lays down his own thoughts and receives the word of God, he does not reach salvation. Even if his disease has been healed and his body has received help, if he does not believe in Jesus as the Savior who removed his sins, his soul is still under sin.

The greatest evidence of power given to us today is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. There is no greater spiritual miracle than for a sinner to hear this word, receive the remission of all the sins of his heart, and become a child of God. If a person hears the gospel and does not receive it because of his own

doctrines and stubbornness, he is repeating the obstinacy of Chorazin and Bethsaida.

Jesus said that if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. He said that in the day of judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for these cities.

This word clearly testifies that God's judgment asks each person to answer also for the light and the opportunities he received. The responsibility of the one who heard the word abundantly and rejected it is greater than that of the one who had few opportunities to hear the truth. Having experienced much of God's grace does not automatically become salvation; one must respond to that grace with faith.

For knowing much of the word to become a blessing, one must submit one's own thoughts to that word. On the contrary, if one only piles up knowledge and does not believe, that knowledge can become evidence on the day of judgment that he heard the truth. Therefore, when you hear the word, do not put it off; you must receive it now with faith.

True repentance is returning to God

The reason Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were rebuked is that they did not repent. The true repentance the Scriptures speak of does not stop at merely regretting one's wrongs and shedding tears. It is turning back from the way that departed from God and receiving the word of God and the salvation He has given.

True repentance begins with admitting first that one is a sinner before the Law of God. One must admit that one has no

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righteousness of one's own and no ability to wash away one's own sins. And one must turn from one's own efforts and believe in the righteousness of God that Jesus has fulfilled.

Jesus took on all our sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. If a person did not know this fact and kept trying to wash away his sins with his own prayers of repentance, he must now turn from that wrong faith and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This is the true spiritual repentance that is joined to the remission of sins.

Even after receiving the remission of sins, if we have done something wrong, we must admit it before God and set our conduct right. But the confession at that time is not a matter of washing away again some sin that Jesus failed to remove. It is admitting our fault and turning back according to the word, while believing in the righteousness of the Lord who has already remitted all sins.

The person who enters the kingdom of God lays down his own knowledge and his own righteousness. He admits that he is a creature and was a sinner, and receives with thanksgiving the salvation the Creator has given. The Lord exalts the person who humbles himself before God, and the person who exalts himself to the end is brought low under judgment.

A heart that receives the word like a little child

Jesus gave thanks to the Father, the Lord of heaven and earth. For God had hidden the truth of salvation from those who consider themselves wise and prudent, and had revealed it to little children. He said that this was the Father's will.

Faith like a little child's is not an attitude of believing

people's words unconditionally, without any thought. It means the humble and pure heart that does not set up its own stubbornness before the word of God, but receives it just as the Father speaks.

A heart like a little child's is needed also when we hear the word that Jesus took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Instead of rejecting it at once because you have not heard it in your own denomination, you must look into what Matthew chapter 3, John chapter 1, and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament actually say.

If God's record is clear, you must lay down your own thoughts and believe. If Jesus says that He took on all sins, you must admit that the sins of your own heart were also included in them. If God says you are without sin, you must believe that you are without sin according to the word, not according to your own feelings. Such faith is faith like a little child's.

Why one's own wisdom veils the truth

The word that God has hidden the truth from the wise and prudent does not mean that God excludes certain people from salvation without reason. It means that the person who relies on his own wisdom and judges the word of God cannot receive the truth even when it appears before his eyes.

A person may accept the blood of the Cross and yet reject as something unfamiliar the fact that Jesus' baptism is joined to the passing on of sin. He may consider the explanation that one becomes clean little by little through daily repentance more reasonable than the word that the remission of sin was completed once and for all. But salvation was accomplished not by human common sense but by the righteousness of God.

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We are not to throw away wisdom and reason but to place them under the word of God. We should examine the Scriptures closely and understand the surrounding context, but we must put the authority of final judgment not in our own thinking but in the word. Then the truth of salvation that was hidden becomes plainly visible to the heart.

The revelation given through the Son

Jesus said that the Father had given all things to Him. He said that no one knows the Son except the Father, and that no one knows the Father except the Son and the one who receives revelation according to the Son's will. The way to know God opens through Jesus Christ.

People can know Jesus only as an excellent teacher or as a prophet who worked miracles. But the fact that Jesus is the Creator God, and the Savior who came in the flesh, received baptism from John the Baptist, and died on the Cross to save sinners, can be known only by receiving the revelation of the word.

When God opens and shows the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if you receive that word with your heart, you come to know the Father. You come to know how righteous and how loving God is, and with what wisdom He removed our sins completely. This knowledge is not mere information; it becomes the faith that gives the remission of sins and eternal life.

The heaviest burden man carries

Jesus called to Himself those who labor and are heavy laden.

Man has the toil of making a living, responsibility toward his family, and anxieties over sickness and the days to come. No one can live in this world carrying no burden at all.

But the heaviest burden man carries is the burden of sin. However much a person smiles outwardly and seems to be at ease, if there is sin in his heart he cannot escape the condemnation of his conscience. The fear that he must receive God's judgment after death also remains deep in his heart.

Religion sometimes makes this burden even heavier. It teaches that to wash away sin one must pray more, fast, and do good works. It says that the original sin has been remitted, but that the personal sins committed daily must be washed away with daily prayers of repentance. Man strives not to sin and fails, and then labors again to wash his sins away, repeating this his whole life long.

Jesus calls precisely such people. To the one who feels the weight of his sin and knows that he cannot solve it by himself, He says to come to the Lord, all of them. He does not tell us to come with our good deeds and religious merits; He tells us to come out to the Lord carrying our heavy burden just as it is.

The Savior who took on every burden

The reason Jesus can give us rest is that He Himself took on the burden of our sins. The Lord did not comfort us with words only, telling us not to worry. He bore with His own body the actual passing on of sin and the judgment that the sinner had to receive.

Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He took onto His own body all

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the sins from Adam to the last person of this world. This was the beginning of the salvation by which God fulfilled all righteousness.

Jesus carried that sin and went to the Cross. By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, He paid all the wages of sin, and received in our place the curse and the judgment we had to receive. He rose again on the third day and overcame the power of sin and death.

This is the perfect salvation testified by the water, the blood, and the Spirit. The water is the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist; the blood is the judgment of the Cross; and the Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and that this salvation is true. These three are not salvations separated from one another, but the righteousness of God completed as one.

Since Jesus has already taken on all our sins, we must not try to carry that burden again. Not only our past sins but our present and future sins as well were included in the sin of the world. When we believe this fact, the burden of sin is lifted from our conscience, and we find the rest of coming boldly before God.

The faith that comes out to the Lord

Jesus told all who labor and are heavy laden to come to Him. Coming out to the Lord is not going in the flesh to find some place. It is hearing the word of the salvation Jesus accomplished and believing it with the heart.

People try to go to the Lord after their circumstances have improved and their conduct has become clean. They think God will receive them only after they have reduced their sins to some degree and prayed much. But just as a sick person does not first become healthy and then go to the doctor, the sinner must come

out to the Savior just as he is, carrying the burden of his sin.

What we must do is acknowledge God's judgment of us. If the Law says we are sinners, we must not make excuses but admit it. And if the gospel says that Jesus has removed all sins, we must receive that word just as it is as well. Within the word we must admit that we were sinners originally, and within the word we must believe that we have become righteous through the righteousness of Jesus.

The person who comes out to the Lord relies on the word rather than on his own feelings. He does not believe that he is without sin only when his heart feels at peace. Even when his feelings waver and his own lack comes into view, he holds fast to the word that the salvation Jesus accomplished is perfect. Within that faith, true rest continues.

The gentle and lowly heart of the Lord

Jesus said that His own heart is gentle and lowly. The Creator God put on flesh and came to this earth to save man, His creature. He who is without sin took on the sins of sinners and received the death of the Cross in the lowest place.

The Lord's gentleness is not an attitude that takes sin lightly and unconditionally closes its eyes to it. It is the love that carries out the judgment of sin to the full, and yet does not bring that judgment down upon the sinner but receives it in his place. Rather than condemning us and destroying us, He gave His own body and brought us to life.

Even after we have been saved, we must learn the Lord's gentleness and lowliness. We must not despise or harshly condemn the person who does not know the gospel. Remembering that we too, had it not been for grace, would have

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lived carrying the burden of sin, we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit with a patient and humble heart.

A life that takes up the yoke of the word and learns

Jesus told us to take His yoke and learn from Him. Then, He said, our hearts will find rest. A yoke is the implement placed on the neck of an ox so that it plows the field receiving its master's guidance. To take the Lord's yoke means to entrust oneself to the Lord's word and will and to follow His leading.

People think that if they lived freely, wearing no yoke at all, it would be comfortable. But when we throw off the word of the Lord, we come to wear a heavier yoke: our own desires, the values of the world, and the lies of the devil. We labor to prove that our own thinking is right, and we grow weary trying to solve our sin by ourselves.

This process requires self-denial. When our own thoughts differ from the word, we must lay our thoughts down. Even if in our own feelings we still seem to be sinners, if God says that the one who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is righteous, we must believe that word. When we deny our own righteousness, the Lord's righteousness takes its place in our hearts.

Even after we are saved, we must keep wearing the Lord's yoke and keep learning. Within the church we hear the word, hold our own thoughts up to the word, and learn the life that seeks first the kingdom of God and the gospel. The yoke of the word is not a burden that oppresses us but the guidance of love that keeps us from going down the wrong path.

The light burden of serving the gospel

Jesus said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. This word does not mean that if we follow the Lord there will be no hardship at all. The way of serving the gospel requires sacrifice and endurance, and at times we may receive misunderstanding and persecution.

Even so, the Lord's burden is light because the work of salvation is not something we must complete. Jesus accomplished all the heaviest work: taking on sin, being judged, and rising again. We take part in the work of believing that completed gospel, giving thanks, and delivering it to other people.

The Lord does not tell us to do alone what is beyond our ability. He gives the Holy Spirit, joins the church and coworkers to us, and supplies the strength and the material things we need. He gives each person a place to serve the gospel according to the gifts and circumstances he has received. Some deliver the word, some make literature, and some join in with prayer, with material support, and with small acts of service.

The rest Jesus gives is the rest of a heart that has been reconciled to God. When we believe that Jesus removed all sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, we gain the assurance that no sin remains for which we must be judged by God. We hold the hope that even after death the eternal kingdom of God awaits us.

The person who has found true rest invites other souls to the Lord. He does not stay at resting comfortably alone, but delivers the gospel of the complete remission of sin to those still under the burden of sin. As the Lord has given us rest, we long for other people also to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and find rest.

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The way we must choose today before the word

In the latter half of Matthew chapter 11, two kinds of people appear. There are those who saw many mighty works and words and yet did not repent, and there are those who, like little children, receive the word of revelation and come out to the Lord. On the one side there is judgment, and on the other side there is rest for the heart.

Jesus came to this earth with a gentle and lowly heart to save us from judgment. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist He took on all our sins, and He paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and rose again. Now He says to everyone who carries the burden of sin, come to Me, all of you.

We must throw off the heavy yoke of trying to wash away our sins with our own prayers of repentance and good deeds. We must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Lord has already completed, and take up the yoke of the word. We must hold ourselves up to the word and admit what we originally were, and we must also admit the fact that our sins have been removed by the righteousness of the Lord.

We must not keep the word close at hand and yet reject it, like Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Today we must humble our hearts and come out to the Lord. Believing the gospel that Jesus removed all sins through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, we must be delivered from the burden of sin and judgment and enjoy the eternal rest the Lord gives. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Faith like a little child

< Matthew 11:25-30 >

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'"

These days I am preparing a book. This book deals with the Nicene Creed contained in the Apostles' Creed. The Nicene Creed was made in the year 325, by men whom the Roman emperor of that time set to the task. But this creed tore down the work Jesus accomplished and the plan of God the Father. And in its place it set up a new religion. That is how today's Catholicism came to be made.

Jesus' baptism, which the Nicene Creed left out

Those who believe in Jesus must rightly know how Jesus

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removed our sins completely. Jesus came to this earth and, in the year He turned thirty, received baptism from John the Baptist. Thus He took over all the sins of the world onto Himself. And He hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, and rose from the dead, and saved us. This is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But though people ought to have made this fact rightly known, they did not make it rightly known.

Having committed so hideous a deed, that man, because he was then the emperor of Rome, seized and killed all who would not believe as he had laid down. So people were afraid and did not dare speak. Afterward the Reformers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also took it over just as it was, changed only the words, and wrote it again. And so it has become a world where the leaders of Catholicism lord it over people and the leaders of Christianity lord it over people, even now.

Then who is it that suffers the loss because of it? It is precisely those who believe in Jesus. Because the most important thing was taken out, people have been deceived for 1,700 years even while believing in Jesus. For 1,700 years people died believing that if they believed in Jesus they would go to the kingdom of God. Then where indeed did they go when they died? They were sinners until they died.

Look at the words of the hymns. Almost all of them are about going before God, worshiping and being faithful, pleasing God, and so receiving blessings. In truth, all such praise ought to be changed. But if we did so suddenly, people would greatly misunderstand, so we are leaving them as they are. The book I am preparing this time contains exactly such words.

The book I am now preparing deals with who corrupted the gospel, and when, where, what, why, and how. It tells it historically, and it tells it by comparing it with the Scriptures. Looked at objectively, whose fault is it, really? Since we have

come to know this even now, ought we not now to reject that wrong and return to the Lord? Someone has to tell that story, but there is not a single such book on the market. There is no such book anywhere in the whole world. The point is precisely that.

Someone must shoulder the load and do that work, but people are afraid and are not doing it. Then would I not be afraid? I too am afraid. But when the time comes to go, one need only go. It is before one reaches that situation that it is frightening; once one actually reaches that situation, it is not a great problem.

Faith that can praise even in the face of death

The early church Christians who were in Rome were persecuted by the emperors. Inside the arena they were nailed to crosses, tied to wood and burned to death, and thrown as food to the beasts and killed. Yet before they died like that, they gathered together and praised God. Those who saw it thought it strange. How, they asked, could praise come out of the mouths of people who were about to be killed?

Everyone, when death draws near, praise does not come out of the people of the world. They cannot praise God. But the person who has faith in his heart—praise comes out of him precisely at that time. The confession comes out: now I am going before the Lord; I am going for the glory of the Lord. Only then does one come to confess: though I go, I have a place to go. He is so thankful that the Lord has saved him, and thankful even to receive persecution for the Lord, that he can sing praise.

But the person who has not been born again can never do so. He grovels and begs and tries to get out of that situation by any means. If we meet such things in the last days, do you think we will grieve and beg and plead for our lives? We will not. If you

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now believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you will not. The Lord, for you and for me, received baptism from John the Baptist and was passed the sin of the world, and was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and saved us. In the heart of the person who believes this, the Holy Spirit dwells. Such a person can never become servile.

If such a world really comes, we will be martyred boldly. It is rather now that is harder. For while we live we must serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit, endure, and hold out patiently. It is hard because we must live for the Lord, and must wait patiently for things that do not readily come to pass to be accomplished. Nothing else is hard. When death comes upon us, it is rather a good thing. For it is going before the Lord.

Why do sins not disappear from the heart when you believe a religion?

I am now making a document called “Return from the Nicene Creed to the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit!” Printed as a book, it will come to four hundred and some pages. When people see this book, they will be amazed that there is someone who brought out such a book. They will say, to think that our mission society has brought out such a book—the gospel was new, and this is new as well. And they will come to investigate whether what this man says is historically correct. And having investigated, they will say, in fact I too have thought it somewhat strange.

At one time 97 or 98 percent of all Europe believed Catholicism. But what joy was there in their hearts? They were always afraid, and always weary with serving. However hard they tried, their sins did not disappear and they were still sinners,

and so they were sorrowful. This book gives the prescription for why that was so. It is the same as being able to treat a disease once you know the disease. Why, though they believed in Jesus, they had sin and grieved; why they had no assurance of going to heaven—this book tells it all.

If people lay our books and the Scriptures side by side and read them in comparison, there will be those who throw away all they have believed until now. But those who do not will instead glare with fury in their eyes. This is not challenging them; it is rebuking them. Deceiving people and swindling them of material things can be passed over. But the deed of making a new religion with souls as the pretext, so that people could not receive the remission of sins, cannot be passed over. Someone must point out such a deed without fail.

If God permits it, this work will be accomplished. Hearing the mission news a while ago, I learned that the Germans are taking more than two hundred copies of our combined volumes. The Germans are strait-laced. They are people who believe by comparing with the Scriptures. And they have begun to receive this gospel of the water and the Spirit. And they recommend this book to one another, they say. They tell others: I read this book and sin disappeared from my heart; this is the gospel the Bible speaks of.

In the old days Europe was strong among the nations, but not now. We study the Scriptures. We look at them in the original languages as well. The Bible was originally recorded in Hebrew and Greek, and these days we can examine it all. In the original languages, too, it is recorded that when Jesus received baptism, He was passed our sins by this same method. If we believe in Jesus, through what do we believe? We believe through the word. Then, since it is so recorded in the word, ought we not to believe just as it is?

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The Father's will revealed to little children

Today's passage, the word of Matthew chapter 11, verses 25 to 27, is recorded like this.

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

Jesus came to fulfill the gospel of the truth on this earth, and He also proclaimed it. And the one who receives this is the person who has a spirit like a little child's. So God the Father hid this from the people who are said to be wise. He hid it from those who call themselves smart and superior, and revealed it to little children. Jesus gave thanks for this, and said that its having come to pass so was the Father's will.

You cannot meet the Lord through the teachings of the theologians

A man like me believed what Jesus did, and came to know it and believe it through the word, and received the remission of sins. The Scriptures are made up of the word of God, so if you look at them you can know. In the old days I, too, had many Bible commentaries. But I threw them all away. I packed them into rice sacks, tied them up, and buried them in the sea. When they would not sink, I hung stones on them and sank them.

Why would I have done that? If giving those books to other people would have profited them, I would have given them. But

it was because, if you look at those books, you are rather ruined. If you learn just what the theologians taught and believe it just so, you cannot meet the Lord. So I put them into the water, and even then could not dispose of them all; the remaining books I decided to sell off in front of a theological seminary, and I put up a notice.

I wrote up a notice that I would hand over books worth thirty or forty million won for a mere one million won. Soon a man came and bought those books. But before that man loaded the books and left, I confessed this for conscience's sake. I told him: I studied with these books but did not meet the Lord; therefore you also, if you study with these books, will not meet the Lord. The man looked at me strangely. But it was a matter that weighed on my conscience before God, and I could not help telling him.

From whom did today's Christian theologians learn? They believe the Nicene Creed just as it is. And so they leave out the baptism Jesus received from John, and say that He saved us by the blood of the Cross alone. For them, believing in Jesus is very simple. They only say that Jesus came as our Savior; no one says that Jesus was born and at thirty received baptism from John. They say only that He received the sentence of death from the governor Pilate, suffered, and hung on the Cross and saved us. Since Jesus died for us, they say, should we not serve that Jesus well—at the end of every word, that is all they say.

Churches where offerings were given but sins keep piling up

So they call for special offerings, pledged offerings, and mission offerings. They say God gives blessings to the one who

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gives much. People gave with all their might, thinking, surely a pastor would not lie. But far from becoming rich, their circumstances grew harder the further they went, and their sins grew ever more numerous.

Before believing in Jesus, they did not know the Law. But believing in Jesus and living the life of faith, they came to know the Law, and each time they sinned they realized, I have committed sin again. So the sins pile up faster than the prayers of repentance can remove them. If you go to a clergyman and ask, he says that is normal. He says you must live a life of being sanctified, offering prayers of repentance daily. He asks you back instead whether you have kept the Lord's Day well.

So, to keep the Lord's Day, some even quit the job they had been going to, moved to a job where they could keep the Lord's Day, and went through every kind of hardship. And yet their sins grew ever more numerous. In the end, at the last, they pin their hopes on the prayers of repentance and the doctrine of sanctification, live that way, and die.

One man gave much offering money when he was young. Later he even sold his house and gave, and gave even all his lease deposit, until nothing was left. His family departed this world and his children all moved out to live on their own, and only his own body remained. His sins were many and his body was infirm, and then the church told him that it would now be better for him to stay at home and not come out. Since the church stairs were high for one who came limping, they said, stay at home and we will visit you from time to time and lead worship for you. Those words were so hurtful to him. He had given all the money he had until now, and it seemed to him that they were telling him not to come out now that he could not give offerings.

Another man asked the senior pastor to officiate at his child's wedding. But the pastor said he was busy and had no time to

officiate. He let it pass, thinking that was that; but later he heard that the pastor had gone to the wedding of the son of a great company's chairman, officiated there, and received a large honorarium. It was a sum beyond comparison with officiating for his own church member. When he learned that, he was greatly disappointed and felt betrayed, and after that he did not go out to church.

These days there are many people who do not go out to church, and mostly it is for reasons like these. One man gave a large sum, a part of his property, as an offering, but his name was missing from the list of those who had given. When the church building was finished and plaques of appreciation were given to those who had given offerings, they did not give one to him. Thinking it strange, he went and asked, and he was told, do you want to make a show of having given much? And a certain elder, learning that some amount was missing from the church building costs, said they should check into it, only to be told, do you suspect us?

That elder could say nothing and came back holding only a hurt heart, and thought, I must not attend this church. So he looked for another church, and visited a country church where hardly anyone came. There were aged elders there and people whose bodies were infirm. When he made up his mind, I will place my membership here and give my offerings and serve, he felt at peace. But later he heard that the pastor of the church he had first attended was exposed for having siphoned off and exploited part of the building offerings, was driven out of the church, and even received legal measures. There are truly many people these days who cannot go out to church like this. What has been exposed is only the tip of the iceberg.

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I believe the word of God just as it is

Everyone, there are many people who believe in Jesus, but what kind of person does the Lord meet? He meets the person who receives the word of God purely, with the heart of a little child. Then who are those who are not like little children, who count themselves prudent and smart? Among you, too, there may be some who think like this: on the Internet they say that if you believe only in the blood of the Cross you receive the remission of all sins, and that if you only call on the name of Jesus you are saved—is that pastor not a one-track man who knows only one thing and not the other two? So I think there may also be people who do not receive at face value the word of God that I deliver.

Everyone, Jesus spoke like this. What kind of person is it who believes in Jesus, receives the remission of sins in his heart, becomes a worker of God, and goes to the kingdom of heaven? It is precisely the person who is like a little child. In worldly matters I am terribly stubborn. If someone says that what is not so is so, my conscience cannot bear it. I have been so from childhood. For example, my son was born in a certain hospital, and when someone tried to write that he was born in a different place, since that was not the fact, I felt the reproach of my conscience.

Before I was born again, you cannot imagine how hard I struggled because of such things. If I once said that what was not so was so, it kept following me around. But the Scriptures speak like this: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).* I believe this word just as it is. I believe it without any condition. Why? Because it is the word of God.

When I was learning Hebrew at the theological seminary, we once took an examination on Psalm 23. We were told to render

Psalm 23 in our own language into Hebrew. When I had rendered it and looked at it, what I had done was poor indeed; but when I opened the original text, it was truly magnificent. It was then that I learned that this Bible we hold is a Bible translated that well.

In the process of being rendered into our language, this Bible inherited not a little of the expression and idiom of the Chinese Bible. So there are passages that, though in our own language, do not yield their meaning at once. It is because words in the Chinese style remain in it as they are. For one who does not know Chinese characters well, it is somewhat difficult to read straight through.

Matthew chapter 3 is such a case. *"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).*

Here, the righteousness in *"all righteousness"* is written with the character ui (義), meaning right. In Greek it is dikaiosune (δικαιοσύνη), meaning what is right and fitting in God's sight. That is, it is the word that for Jesus to receive baptism from John and be passed the sins of all mankind is what is right in God's sight, and what is fitting.

John the Baptist is the representative of mankind. That John gave baptism to Jesus. This carries straight on from the way, in the Old Testament, the high priest, representing the people, laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed the sins onto it. *"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*

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by the hand of a suitable man" (Leviticus 16:21). That is why the Lord said that it was fitting for them to fulfill all righteousness by doing so. Our Bible tells us all of this just as it is.

I, too, came to realize it at last while reading this passage: that our Lord received baptism from John and was passed all the sins of the world, and carried that sin and was nailed to the Cross and died shedding His blood, paying the wages of sin in full, and rose from the dead on the third day, and so accomplished our salvation completely. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

For a while I could not speak. The thought swept over me: then He has taken away my sins too; He has taken away the sins of all the people of the world as well. This was exactly the meaning of what John cried out when he saw the Lord the next day: *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).*

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world

Those who have believed in Jesus and been saved on this earth in this way are those who have received the word of God. They received it with a pure heart like a little child's and received salvation. We have not seen Jesus with our eyes, nor can we see Him with our eyes now. We can know Him only through the word. We hold fast to this word and receive salvation by faith. It comes to pass according to this word. Whatever our own thoughts may be, it makes no difference. But between us and God there stand the theologians and the Roman Catholic religion, and the theologians of Christianity and the

pastors and the teachers are wedged in. These are the ones who corrupt the truth of this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In John chapter 1, verse 29 it is recorded, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* Jesus received baptism from John and shouldered the sin of the world. Carrying that sin of the world and going to the Cross took three years. For three years He preached the gospel on this earth, and at last He was nailed to the Cross and died.

Are not the sins we commit daily precisely the sin of the world? Jesus was passed that sin of the world onto His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. And He carried it away. The person who receives the word purely realizes it like this: Jesus received baptism from John, and so the sin of the world passed over to Jesus; and He carried that sin and went to the Cross; and there He shed His blood and died; and He rose again on the third day; and so He became our Savior—and believing this, he obtains salvation.

But in theology they divide sin into two. God speaks of sin as one. Hamartia, that is, departing from the will of God, is sin. But the theologians divide sin into two, the original sin and the personal sins. And so they say that the word about the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world means He carries away the original sin, and that Jesus died on the Cross for the original sin. And the sins committed after that are the personal sins, they say, and those sins receive remission through prayers of repentance.

They divide it up into original sin and personal sins like this. But Jesus took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, and carried away the sin of the world in full. What the Scriptures say and what the theologians say differ like this. Therefore the person who receives the word of God purely receives salvation. But the person who takes in again what men

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have once twisted in interpretation becomes confused. And so he comes unable to believe according to the word of God. In the end he becomes a religious person, that is, one who makes something himself and believes it himself, one who believes what men have interpreted, and he fails to meet Jesus.

That is why Jesus said, even so, that this having come to pass was the Father's will. There are people in the world who are called superior and called smart. There are people who say, the word of God and the church of God speak this way, but elsewhere they speak that way. To keep people from receiving the remission of sins in that manner is not right. It is fitting that such a person receive judgment. Jesus is speaking this word now.

Faith like a little child's that believes the word wholly

Everyone, do you agree with this word? Whether you agree or not rests with you. I will not cling to you and plead abjectly. When we look at the word of God, we must know what the word is saying. Only after I met the Lord did I come to know what the word is saying. Commentaries are unnecessary. The Holy Spirit who dwells in me makes it known. Only a dictionary is necessary.

And so I make the word I preach into sermon books and give them out over the whole world. When people believe the word written in these books, they receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit. I believe that. Why? Because I believed the word of God. I believe that these people, exactly like me, receive salvation. That is why I am giving them out. And in fact the news comes that they are receiving the remission of sins.

One man attended church, believed everything as he was told,

and later even spoke in tongues, saying he had received the Holy Spirit. But an evil spirit tormented him, saying, rather than live like this you would do better simply to die, until he even tried to take his own life. Just when he was thinking that he would now have to give up the life of faith, a friend brought him a book written in French. Reading that book, even before he had finished reading it, he received the remission of sins and was born again, and his heart became clean. That man recently sent in his testimony of salvation.

That is precisely believing purely, like a little child. A little child is easily deceived. But God does not deceive us. Therefore, when a person like a little child reads the word of God just as it is written, and knows what this word means and believes it, he receives salvation. God is not a swindler. He never deceives. So to the person who is like a little child, God is a truly good God.

But the affairs of the world are different. In this world, if you deal with just anyone as innocently as a little child, you are always being deceived and end up a penniless beggar. Worldly affairs must all be doubted and examined. For example, after I had eye surgery, they made up several kinds of eye drops and told me to put them all in, and I put them all in as I was told. But even while I slept at night my eyes stung, and tears poured out for hours at a time. So I put in only two of them, and now I can look at you without shedding tears. In the things of the world one must believe with a certain measure of discernment.

But the word of God is different. If you believe the word of God only to a certain degree, you can rather go to hell. The word of God must be believed one hundred percent. For the word of God is exceedingly deep, and this word is the truth. If you know this fact just as it is, it is truly deep. Yet people are deceiving others about this. The pastor of a certain church says that the original sin is remitted when you receive baptism, and the sins

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committed daily are remitted through prayers of repentance. But if it is by prayers of repentance that one receives the remission of sins, then it turns out that Jesus failed to remove all our sins.

People say to me: if you believe like that, you will be branded a heretic, and you will be ruined and become a beggar. So I said this: "I do not mind becoming a beggar; I can work and feed myself. But it is recorded in the word of God that Jesus received baptism from John and took on my sins and removed those sins on the Cross; as long as this word stands, I will believe, and if I am ruined for it, I will be ruined.

But if people fail to receive the remission of sins because they do not know what God has done, I will deliver this to them. Even if they do not believe, I will deliver it. If I hide the fact that Jesus received baptism from John like this and took on our sins, and keep my mouth shut, these people will not know it and will go to hell. And He said that He will then seek the price of their sin from me. Therefore I will deliver it without fail. And I will not deliver it with my mouth only. I will make it into literature and deliver it in the utmost detail."

Compare the claims of theology with the word of the Scriptures, and they differ

If people say they understand only when it is told theologically, I am a man well versed in theology, too. These days I am making some use of that part. I am not a man lacking or backward in that field. In that field I permit no one's challenge. I did not learn just one or two kinds of theology; when I hear something, I know from what school of thought it is, and in which book, on what page, it appears. One must not read only the things of one's own denomination. And theology books must

always be compared with the word of the Scriptures.

Compare the claims of theology with the word of the Scriptures, and they differ from each other. Set what the theologians assert side by side with the word of the Scriptures and look, and the Scriptures speak this way while theology speaks differently. So I learned all of theology and then threw it all away. And so I absolutely do not use difficult words. Theological terms and the words that end in some -ism are useless words, so I do not use them.

Among you, too, there may be some who think like this: the people of the world often use words like redemption and atonement—why does that pastor not use such words? Is it not that he cannot because he does not know them? But if I use such words, you are rather confused.

The word gusok, redemption, means having saved by paying a price, by paying the cost. But in our language there is another word gusok. When a person commits a crime, seizing him and locking him up is also called gusok, detention. Since one word carries several meanings like this, we must not keep using such words and confuse people. Rather, we must unfold that word and deliver it like this: Jesus received baptism from John and took on our sins, and was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose from the dead, and became our Savior.

Jesus became the One who delivered us out of sin. In other words, He became the One who saved us. We unfold the word salvation and tell it like that. Then, the moment you hear it, you understand at once and can believe at once. If difficult words are used, you must look in a dictionary just to know that one word, and even looking in the dictionary you do not know it. Then you must dig down into the etymology of that word, and once you dig in, there is no end.

But now the time has come to put to use what I once learned

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uselessly and threw away. Since I know all that what these people say is simply not right, I can analyze it all and make it plain point by point: this is what the theologian says, but it does not hold; the Scriptures speak thus. Only, if I do that, the book grows thick. It must not be too thick. The hearer needs to know only what he must know. The rest he can compare as he lives on.

In the old days, when a certain famous pastor preached in a big church and enjoyed popularity among the people, I said that his sermons were talk at the level of the second or third year of elementary school. He only said that the precious blood of the Cross washed away our sins, but it is not that simple. There are also people who put the Holy Spirit foremost. They keep saying, by the Spirit, by the Spirit; but the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God who dwells only in the person who has received the remission of sins.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God who comes upon the person without sin. But if someone has not received the remission of sins and yet says that the Holy Spirit has come upon his heart and he speaks in tongues, that is an evil spirit. Yet at every turn people say that one must pray by the Spirit and minister by the Spirit. And they preach as the feelings rise up in their hearts, telling people to receive blessings, declaring that sins have been removed, crying out whatever comes.

If you tell such people to put it all into writing and bring it out as a book, they say this man is a heretic. That is why people cannot bring out books. Everyone, a book is not something one brings out just because one has money. One brings it out only when one has strength enough and confidence enough. Only the person who can set it out in orderly logic, with nothing for anyone to seize on, without departing one step from the word of the Scriptures, brings out a book. If a person brings out as a book what he has spoken as emotion welled up in his heart, he

becomes a heretic at once.

People do not recognize it. But do you think that Spirit-centrism is good? It is because of that that they all come to ruin. They say that if you believe in Jesus you all become rich, that if you believe in Jesus your diseases are healed, that if you believe in Jesus everything prospers. With talk of the threefold gospel and the fivefold blessing, they lead people astray. Now I will close the message. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

My yoke is easy and My burden is light

< Matthew 11:25-30 >

"At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'"

The one who believes the word of God just as it is, with a pure heart, receives salvation

Last time we shared the word that it is the will of God the Father to reveal the gospel to those whose hearts are pure like little children and to let them receive salvation. The Lord said that no one knows the Son except the one who has received the revelation of the Father and of the Son. These are all true words.

To the pure the word is spread, and when the books are delivered to them, they read those books and receive salvation.

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Because they receive it purely, they receive salvation. But those who are not pure are different. The person who thinks with his human head and pieces this and that together does not believe this word. Rather, he believes the words of the person who explains the word differently.

Let me give an example. It is said that Jesus removed the sin of the world. When it says the world here, it refers to this whole world. It is the whole world from the time heaven and earth were created until the last day. Jesus took on that sin of the world once and for all through the baptism He received from John, and was judged once and for all by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and removed it all. It means that He has saved us from all sins. Received just as the word says, it is truly simple.

But when this word is explained theologically, the story changes. People divide sin into the original sin and the personal sins. They say that if you believe in Jesus and receive baptism, the original sin is remitted, and the sins you commit daily are remitted through prayers of repentance. So they say that you must receive the washing of your sins with prayers of repentance until you die in order to go to heaven. This is dividing sin up by man's own thinking.

It is because people do not believe according to the word that their sins do not disappear. When the Scriptures say the world, we must grasp what that world means and receive it.

Unlike this, those who love money-making make use of people's minds. They tell people's futures and offer to change their names, and so they make money. They say, such and such a thing will happen to you, so to escape it you must change your name. They also tell you to beware of water; but any human being must beware of water. They say a benefactor will appear from the west and help you; but everyone lives helping one another. Many people hear such vague words and pay money. It

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is because, when one digs into the weak spot of the other person and speaks plausibly, the odds of hitting the mark come out rather well. This is precisely the work of manipulating people's minds.

But the word of God is different. God does not lie and speaks only truthful words. Therefore, when the pure receive that word just as it is, they receive the remission of sins, become the children of God, and receive the Holy Spirit as well. That is how salvation comes about.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden"

Today let us look at the word of verse 28. The Lord spoke like this: *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

When we speak of labor and heavy burdens, they are of many kinds. There is the burden of sin, and there is the burden of working. There is the burden of a business one has undertaken, and the burden of what weighs on the heart and must be resolved. We are all those who labor. We are also those who carry heavy burdens.

There is the burden of sin, but bearing the things needed to live out the road ahead of one's own life is also a great burden. I would now like to look with you at the Nicene Creed, which corrupted the faith of the early church.

The Nicene Creed and the religion the Roman emperor made

The Nicene Creed was made in A.D. 325. It was made in the region of Nicaea, and it contains what those who believed in Jesus in the early church were said to have believed. On a single sheet of report paper they wrote in the whole faith of those who believe in Jesus and made it into a creed.

But in that creed the baptism Jesus received from John is missing. The holy catholic church, the communion of saints, and the remission of sins are in it, but the truth that Jesus remitted our sins once and for all through the baptism He received from John is missing from it. Jesus remitted our sins once and for all; if one says that sins keep receiving remission progressively, that is no different from other religions.

In Buddhism, when a problem arises, people unconditionally call on the name of Buddha and cling to him. But if Christianity also says that Jesus came and removed only the original sin and did not remove the personal sins, and that He removes them each time we offer daily prayers of repentance, how would that differ from other religions? That in itself is wrong. For the Scriptures say that Jesus completed our salvation once and for all.

Yet people made this Nicene Creed and set up a false creed. They said, this is what Jesus did, so you must believe exactly according to this. Those who would not believe as laid down were seized and killed. It began in A.D. 325, and now it is the year 2025, so it has been exactly 1,700 years. It means that people believed the Nicene Creed and believed in Jesus for 1,700 years, and went to hell. However much those people believe in Jesus, their sins do not disappear.

Ask those people whether they have believed in Jesus and received the remission of sins, whether they are now without sin,

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and they answer like this: who in the world is without sin even though he believes in Jesus? We sin every day, so how could we be without sin? Rather, they call the person who says he has no sin a heretic. Then it is rather they who are the heretics.

The reason Jesus came to this earth and lived a life of thirty-three years was to remove the sins of us mankind. He was born into this earth borrowing the body of Mary, and at thirty received baptism from John the Baptist and was passed the sin of the world. And He was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. He removed all our sins and said that it was finished. And yet you say that one still has sin even though he believes in Jesus?

They believe that they have sin. And the place that believes so is called the orthodox church. The orthodox church spoken of here is Catholicism, and it means the Nicene Creed. That creed was made by one emperor of Rome. He made the creed and established the religion for the harmony and unification of the people of his own country. He said that if they believed it, he would give them benefits. He said he would make them government officials and cut their taxes, and so the people all believed.

What is more, he said, you may keep believing what you originally believed, and just believe this along with it. Since he said there was no need to throw away what they had believed, people believed this and believed that without any burden. Since he said taxes would be cut if they believed, they believed on the spot. In that way a sham creed was set up, and Catholicism has believed it for 1,700 years. The Protestant believers, too, afterward inherited this and have believed it for long ages, and Catholicism has believed it firmly for 1,700 years. Catholicism and Protestantism alike are religions. Because they do not believe according to the word of Jesus, they go to hell.

Only those born again of water and the Spirit enter the kingdom of heaven

Therefore we cannot but teach this truth. Jesus came to this earth by water and the Spirit and removed our sins. The Lord said that unless a person is born again of water and the Spirit, no one can enter the kingdom of heaven. *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).*

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is this. Jesus came to this earth clothed in flesh. Through the baptism Jesus received from John He was passed our sins, and He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again, and became our Savior. We receive salvation by eating the flesh and blood of Jesus by water and the Spirit. Jesus took on our sins in the flesh, died on the Cross, and rose again, and so saved us. The Holy Spirit entered the body of Mary and was born as a man, and that One is Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures tell us to receive salvation by believing in the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. They say that if we are born again of water and the Spirit, we can enter the kingdom of heaven. But people have changed the salvation that was accomplished in that way.

These days, if you turn on the Christian broadcasts of our country, they say things like this: it has been 1,700 years since the emperor Constantine had men make the Nicene Creed, so it must be commemorated. Today's Presbyterians and Protestants and Catholics all believe it. They say, what great benefits the Roman emperor Constantine bestowed on the Christians; since he made us so excellent a creed of faith, we must commemorate it. Before long they will come out on the broadcasts and do so. They will gather many people and say that thanks must be

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expressed to the emperor Constantine who made the Nicene Creed. They will say that we must thank God for raising up so precious an emperor. But in truth he was a tool of the devil. He had men make the Nicene Creed, and he also had men make the doctrine of the seven sacraments.

The system of religion that made the Scriptures unnecessary

But compare it with the Scriptures, and it is all wrong. Their sin is this: they did away with the Old Testament law of sacrifice that God established, and with the gospel of salvation by which God sent His Son and saved us from sin by water and the Spirit. And they made people believe what they had made up in their own fashion. They said that if you blindly follow them, obey them, and submit to them, you receive salvation.

They laid it down like this: you must receive baptism from a priest, you must receive the sacrament of confession before a priest, and you must receive the sacrament of confirmation from a priest. To receive the Holy Spirit you must without fail receive the laying on of hands from a priest, and to receive the remission of sins you must without fail go to a priest and confess one by one the sins you have committed. Only then, they say, do you receive the remission of sins. Everything is according to the doctrines they themselves laid down: they set the pope and the cardinals and the bishops and the priests up above, and laid it down that only when you go before those men, bow your head, and do as you are told do you receive salvation. And so the Scriptures became unnecessary. Therefore this is a thing that comes to ruin.

Then is Protestantism not like that? Protestantism, too, seems

not to be so, and yet is entirely so. You must go before a pastor and receive baptism, and the pastor must go to the theological seminary his denomination has established and study theology. He must keep according to the regulations the seminary has laid down, and the church members must submit to the pastor ordained there. They must listen to his sermons, believe the doctrines they teach, offer prayers of repentance when they have sinned, and strive to reach sanctification, they say.

So, between Catholicism and Protestantism, who has it good? Only the leaders have it good. In Catholicism, from the pope down, the cardinals and the bishops enjoy the benefits. The members must go before them, bow and scrape, and do as they are told. In Protestantism, too, the ones who have it good are only the leaders. The president of the general assembly, the denomination, the pastors, and the evangelists—only these have it good. In truth, only they receive money. They receive money for doing that work, and the members must go and submit and pay money and be faithful. Then who is it that enjoys the benefit? They made a religion, and the religious leaders receive the benefit. That is the system they have made.

If it were according to the word of the Scriptures, the leader must work, too. The leader, too, must not only point his finger but must work the same as everyone, and whatever work he does, he must serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But they preach three or four sermons in a week and receive tens of millions of won as a stipend, and at times receive even more than that. So only the religious leaders have it good.

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The wolves that devour the sheep, and the true Shepherd

In Protestantism, too, only the religious leaders have it good. The pastors of big churches have faces full of smiles. Though the world is hard these days, they say that God will bring us through this time and bless us. The world is going to grow harder from now on; when will people receive more blessing of material things? Next year is harder than this year. And yet the pastors say that things will get better, that God will bless. They are making excessive guarantees.

The church members follow that talk. They pay the tithe and give thanksgiving offerings and building offerings. That is why Jesus, speaking of the false religious leaders, called them wolves that devour the sheep. The wolves come and tear off all the sheep's flesh and eat it, and throw them away and go. They are the same. They come and tell people to believe in Jesus, to be faithful, to offer prayers of repentance, to do as they are told. And in that way they only suck out the money.

And then, when someone has no money and cannot give offerings well, they treat him coldly. That is the reality. But we all work and serve the Lord. Those who go in front have all the more work. But they are not so.

Everyone, they say a certain church gathers a hundred thousand people. If each person gave only ten thousand won, how much would that be? On top of that, with the tithes and the thanksgiving offerings, the person without money gives ten thousand won, but the person with money gives a hundred thousand won, and some even give offerings running into the hundreds of millions. How much money must be coming in! How much money must be coming in to the senior minister! The basic stipend comes in, and when he goes visiting, people ask

for a prayer of blessing and set out an envelope. So their faces are sleek and shining with oil. They have nothing of the weariness and exhaustion we have.

Their world is warped like that. Those who receive a large stipend receive enormous sums. But in pioneering churches there are also many who cannot receive a proper stipend. There are those who cannot receive even a million won, and there are those who cannot receive even half a million won and do workplace life while they minister. You cannot imagine how great that gap is. Those who receive much ought to share some of it, but they do not do so.

Then is this slandering another's religion? It is not slandering. One must see the reality rightly. The church members consider it slandering another church, but this is not slander; it is fact. Jesus, too, said to beware of false prophets. *"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" (John 10:10).* Jesus spoke so. Yet they hand out church offices recklessly. They give the offices of deacon, elder, and ordained deacon, and work people to the point of exhaustion, and tell them to give much offering money. Not having attended such a church, I do not know it firsthand, but it is truly a hard thing to bear. Such people cannot hold up under the weight of their sin, and people like us are worn with serving this gospel.

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"Come to Me, and I will give you rest"

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden," He said. Our workers, too, work laboriously. One brother strains to build the farm facilities, and our sisters and brothers do design, make literature, handle computers, and raise the livestock, and it is hard.

To such people Jesus spoke. He said, *"Come to Me, and I will give you rest."* What does this word mean? It is the word that He will help us. When we tell a person that we are having a hard time, that person says that he too is weary: are you the only one having a hard time? I am worn to death myself. But Jesus says, come to Me, all of you. The Lord is telling us to come to Him.

That is, it means pray, and it means ask for help. He is the One who says, I will take it on and help you. Then how great is His power! Unless He were God, He could not speak such words.

Everyone, did Shakyamuni of Buddhism ever say, come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will help you? What founder of a religion in this world could speak such words? Only Jesus could speak these words. For Jesus has the power. Therefore, when we pray, God helps us.

Drive out mockery and fear in the name of Jesus Christ

At times, if it were labor only, it would be all right; it is being mocked that is hardest. One brother told this story. When he goes to the village people to receive their consent forms, some people rebuff him coldly, and some write out the consent form gladly. But since that work is not something finished in a day or two, a

fear arose in the depths of that brother's heart.

It is the thought that if I go to that person and ask him to write this out and stamp his seal, he will take offense and turn against me. The thought that he will say, where do you come from, asking for such a thing—what have you ever done for me, that you demand this? If one receives such treatment, how upset and uncomfortable one's heart must be! It seems that fear settled into his subconscious.

He said that he even dreamed such a dream. He dreamed that he went to receive consent forms, and people threw salt behind him and threw water at him and chased him out, and then he woke up. When he awoke, he was sitting in his own room, and he realized it had been a dream. But even if it is a dream, how unpleasant is one's heart! One on one, they are people who are nothing at all, but such fear had formed in that brother's heart. That is Satan the Devil putting such thoughts into the heart.

When shameful and wretched thoughts come into the subconscious, we must drive them out. We must boldly cry out three times and drive them out: "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you, away with you, Satan! I am doing this for a right cause—why do you torment me? In the name of Jesus Christ I command you, away with you, Satan!" When negative thoughts come into our subconscious, we must drive them out in the name of Jesus Christ. For it is Satan the Devil who puts in such a heart.

We must drive it out. If we do not drive it out, a person becomes wretched. What brings fear must also be driven out, and everything negative must be driven out. Jesus helps us. And Jesus also helps us to receive the remission of sins and follow the Lord, and to carry out the work the Lord assigns. There are many times when we are weary. At that time the Lord speaks.

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"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me"

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:29). The first object the Lord calls with this word is the sinner. If a sinner comes before the Lord and asks, remove my sins; Lord, I am so weary because of sin, so meet me and help me—the Lord never refuses. If there is truly such a person, He grants him detailed realization of the word and removes the sin from his heart.

The Lord is the One who receives us gently and solves that problem. The Lord does not snap at us, saying, have you come again? Did I not remove all your sins? Even when we have sinned and our heart is heavy, He says, that sin too is a sin I have already removed, so now have faith, and do not fall into such things, but live well by faith. He treats us that gently. The Lord is a lowly One.

And doing the Lord's work is what it means to take His yoke and learn from Him. If we do not follow the commands the Lord has commanded, what meaning would there be in saying that we believe in and follow the Lord? He tells us to preach the gospel to the whole world, and so we preach it. But the work of preaching is hard.

Preaching the gospel to the village people is hard enough, and He tells us to preach it to the whole world. It is the Lord's command, so first of all we must shoulder it. We go forward saying, I will do it; I will obey. When we take the Lord's yoke, the Lord carries our burden together with us. He does not lay it on us alone; He pushes from behind, and helps, and prepares the circumstances, and gives answers to prayer as well. He is the One who helps like that.

"My yoke is easy and My burden is light"

And the Lord spoke like this: *"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.'" (Matthew 11:30).* It is the word that if you take on My work in order to preach this gospel following My command, it seems as if you are doing it, but it is not so. If you first obey and challenge it in faith and ask Me for help, I will take on all that burden and enable you to do it, and cause you to receive blessing, and fill up what you need, He says. He does not leave it all to you and look the other way, He says.

The Lord is saying that He is the One who does so. We must believe so and follow so. Because this is God's work, we do it; how could we bear it all ourselves? How could we meet all those village people and persuade them to accept this? When we uphold God's command and give out the books and send them over the whole world, God visits by the Holy Spirit those who read the books, as they read. He moves that person's heart, and as he reads along He grants realization and gives the faith that believes.

In that way He fulfills the Lord's will. We, too, have taken the yoke, but it means that the Lord fulfills all of the yoke we have taken, that is, the work He has entrusted to us.

Such words are words we could even recite from memory, but in our lives they become words of enormous comfort and words of answer. When we meet a hard thing, we are not the only ones who meet hard things. When we meet hardship and ask for help before the Lord, the Lord is with us and lifts that heavy burden, and in the end He is the One who accomplishes it all. I take it that this is what He is telling us.

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Preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit until we die is our work

This year, too, we have many undertakings spread out. We began farm work we had never once done, and spent no small cost in learning it. Having started it, we cannot quit at will, and we are learning, doing as we are told. We also took out a loan and bought a building, and have come to manage it. It would be good to carry these things out well, but you cannot imagine how much care must be given to do so. There is much work to be done with documents and much we have undertaken, and to manage that work well besides is no easy thing.

There is a reason we farm, raise crickets and livestock, and even do business. It is not merely to make a living. These days so much food harmful to the body is coming in that many people are falling ill. If you eat what has been treated with pesticides and herbicides, you fall ill. So it is best to eat what we have raised safely ourselves. Money we can earn by doing business. The harder the times, the wiser it is to farm and raise living things.

But the most important thing is to preach the gospel well before we go. When would this work end? It is not something that ends; we do it until we die.

Before COVID came, I had brought out books up to the sixty-fifth volume. I thought, now it is enough; I have done all that I ought to do from the Scriptures. I thought I would now go to the workshop and just work with the brothers, share good things to eat together, and deliver the word. Then COVID broke out. At such a time, a coworker overseas sent me a mail saying, should you not give us a message at a time like this? I had thought the literature was now finished and meant to stop, but the thought came to me: God is telling me to do it again. At first

I hesitated a little, but if it was God's command I had to do it, so I began again, and obtained a very good result.

We supplemented all that had been lacking, and artificial intelligence had also advanced, so I received much help from it. The old ones we leave as they are, and what we do this time we will translate into the languages of the whole world and post again. Now about two hundred copies of the combined volumes are being taken each day, so it is growing larger and larger. More than four thousand people are taking the audiobooks, and about three thousand five hundred are taking the e-books. So we are preaching the gospel to more than ten thousand people a day. We preach much through the books as well, and many testimonies of salvation come in, so we cannot but do this work.

And now God tells me to set my hand to this Nicene Creed. This is not something I have come to know only now; it is something I have known from very long ago. I ought to have dealt with it long ago, but since everyone believes it, I thought that if I set my hand to it I would not be able to do the other work, and so I could not do it. But it is the right order, and the right thing, to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit first and then deal with this. And so I have now begun, and it is now going well. In a little while the book will come out. Within December it will be ready in four world languages, English among them.

Then we will deliver this to the Catholic believers and the existing Protestant believers of the whole world as well. While delivering the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we will make plain in what respects they are being deceived. We will make plain who Constantine was, what it was he made, what is contained in it, and in what year it was made. Next we must prove what the doctrines they made are, and whether the Reformers took them over and are using them as they are or not, and if they are using them, which parts they are using.

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Vague loud talk does not get through. One must give the grounds for the facts by the six principles: who, when, where, what, why, and how. If you believe in Jesus according to the Nicene Creed, then however much you believe in Jesus by that doctrine, however much you offer prayers of repentance, however faithfully and diligently you live, the sin of your heart does not disappear. Why is that? Because you have already been deceived spiritually, and your heart has been manipulated. This must be made plain.

I will do only about that much. Then, if they ask me to expose the errors of the doctrines of the Presbyterian Church or of Calvin and the other theologians, I can write books on those parts as well. I can write them all. It is not to make personal attacks; I can make fully plain what person made what doctrine, and how that doctrine is wrong compared with the Scriptures. That field is my specialty. Since I always preach only the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you may have a worrying heart: does that man know only that? Can I really follow him? It is not so. The parts where the challenge is made with proper scholarship, I can do perfectly well.

I dislike contending by strength. But by the word I can contend to any extent. I will write a book, I say, so you also try writing a book saying that this is wrong. Do not do it with words only, but try writing it as a book. Is that an easy thing? What is done with words can be denied later—one need only claim that he never said such a thing—but what is done with a book is not so. For a book lays everything bare.

There are many famous pastors in Korea, but there is no one who translates the books he has written into foreign languages and, as we do, posts them on the Internet, sells them, and gives them away free. If what he had said were the truth he would do so, but because it is not the truth he cannot. He only talks big on

the inside. When I went to Japan, too, there was not a single book written by a Korean pastor on this subject. I told them to search by computer whether there was anyone who had written a book on the subject of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—if there was even a single one, I would not sell my books. But there was not a single one. In this field we are that far ahead.

In the end I did place the books with a distributor, but they could not receive them. At first they sold a little, and then they no longer asked for the books. They regarded them as heresy. It is because they, too, believe the Nicene Creed. It is because of the Nicene Creed. Therefore now is precisely the time to deal with the Nicene Creed. The time is exactly that time.

Then the Catholic believers of other countries will also read this book and realize: so we believed wrongly in this part; that is why we became corrupt like this, and the churches stand utterly empty. Now only the shell remains. Only the church buildings remain, and the people have gone. In our country, too, people no longer go out to church. In a little while they will go out even less.

The religious leaders go around visiting, calling people deacon, brother, sister, and bring them along. And having brought them, what do they do? They say they strive to teach the word well, but in the end it is only making people give much offering money and be faithful and submit. If you attend church a long time, do your sins disappear? The longer you believe in Jesus in their way, your sins only grow more numerous. Koreans believe emotionally. They say, pastor, you are very good at slandering others. But this is not slander; I say it because it is the truth. That is why we make it into literature and hand it to the other person, telling him to read it.

If I were one-sidedly calling fact what is not fact, much news refuting me would come by e-mail. Harsh words telling me to

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come to my senses would come, too. But in the end, this work has been entrusted to us, and so we do it. If God helps, it will go well. Even now, in the whole world, there are many who believe this religion, deceived, and go to hell. Even now there are many who take their own lives because of sin.

But when a person reads this one book, if he is one who truly seeks the truth, he receives the remission of sins at once. If you look at the mission news section, there are many people who tried several times to die, and after seeing this book such thoughts vanished. Therefore we believe and give thanks before the Lord. I close the message. ✉

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CHAPTER

12

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Matthew Chapter 12

< Matthew 12:1-50 >

“At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’ Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how

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they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust.' Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

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Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. 'Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.' Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. 'When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked

than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.' While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'"

1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 12 is the chapter in which the clash between Jesus and the Pharisees deepens in earnest. The Pharisees condemn Jesus and His disciples by the standard of the Sabbath regulations and religious tradition, but Jesus makes it plain that He is greater than the temple, that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, and that He is the One who overcomes the power of Satan by the Spirit of God.

This chapter shows that, seeing the same works of Jesus, the multitudes thought, *"Could this be the Son of David?"* while the Pharisees slandered them as the power of Beelzebub. The core problem lay not in a lack of evidence but in the stubborn heart that would not receive Jesus. In the end the passage plainly reveals that the core problem lay not in a lack of evidence but in the stubborn heart that would not receive Jesus.

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1. The disciples who plucked heads of grain and ate on the Sabbath (verses 1–8)

Jesus' disciples, passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, were hungry and plucked heads of grain and ate. The act itself of plucking heads of grain by hand in another's field was something the Law of that day permitted to the poor and the stranger. The reason the Pharisees made an issue of it was that they regarded plucking heads of grain and rubbing them to eat on the Sabbath as work equivalent to harvesting or labor.

Jesus spoke of how David and those who were with him, when they were hungry, ate the showbread that only the priests could eat. He also pointed out that the priests work in the temple even on the Sabbath and yet are blameless, exposing how superficial the Pharisees' judgment was. The Law was given to bring people to life and to have them serve God; it was not a regulation for condemning a hungry person to death.

Jesus then declared, *"In this place there is One greater than the temple."* The Owner of the temple was standing before them, but the Pharisees, while clinging to the regulations of the temple and the Sabbath, failed to recognize Jesus, the true Owner of those regulations.

The words *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice"* do not mean that God unconditionally rejects all sacrifice and worship. They mean that outward religious acts without mercy and faith cannot please God. The Pharisees, while thinking they were keeping the Law, in fact condemned innocent people as sinners.

The words of Jesus, *"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath,"* do not mean that the Sabbath may be disregarded at will. It is the declaration that the authority to determine the true meaning and purpose of the Sabbath belongs to Jesus, and that ultimate rest is given in Him, the Lord of the Sabbath.

2. Healing the man with a withered hand on the Sabbath (verses 9–14)

When Jesus entered the synagogue, there was a man with a withered hand. The people did not pity him; rather, seeking a pretext to accuse Jesus, they asked, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"*

Jesus asked whether they would not lift out a sheep that had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath, and then said that since a man is of far more value than a sheep, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. And when He said to the man with the withered hand, *"Stretch out your hand,"* his hand was restored whole.

This event exposes the contradiction of the Pharisees. They made an issue of healing a person on the Sabbath, yet on that very day they discussed how to kill Jesus. Jesus brought a man to life, while those who claimed to keep the Sabbath thoroughly plotted murder. It was revealed that holding God's mercy and life in the heart matters more than keeping regulations outwardly.

3. The Servant of God who does not break a bruised reed (verses 15–21)

Knowing that the Pharisees sought to kill Him, Jesus left that place. When many people followed Him, He healed the sick, yet He warned them not to make Him widely known.

Matthew explains that this was the fulfillment of the word Isaiah prophesied concerning the Servant of God. Jesus did not come as a political agitator who quarrels with people and raises His voice in the streets to display Himself. He came as the gentle Savior who does not break a bruised reed and does not quench smoking flax.

The bruised reed and the smoking flax bring to mind the figure of a person who cannot rise by himself because of sin,

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pain, and weakness. Jesus does not discard such a person as useless but restores him. Moreover, His salvation is not limited to Israel but will be delivered even to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles also come to put their hope in the name of Jesus.

4. The Beelzebub controversy and the kingdom of God (verses 22–30)

When people brought to Jesus a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, the Lord healed him. The multitudes were amazed and thought, is this not the promised *"Son of David,"* that is, the Messiah?

But the Pharisees slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Because they could not deny Jesus' power, they attributed the source of that power to Satan.

Jesus pointed out that if Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself and cannot stand. And He said that if He casts out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has already come upon them.

In the parable that one must first bind the strong man before entering his house and carrying off his goods, the strong man refers to Satan, and the One who binds him refers to Jesus. Jesus is stronger than the power of Satan, and He delivers those who were bound by Satan.

Therefore no one can keep standing in a neutral position before Jesus. As the words *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad"* declare, one either believes in Jesus and gathers souls together with Him, or comes to stand on the side that rejects Him and scatters.

5. The blasphemy against the Spirit (verses 31–32)

Jesus solemnly warned that every sin and blasphemy of men can be remitted, but that the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be remitted.

This word must be understood in its context. The Pharisees directly saw Jesus healing people and casting out demons by the power of the Spirit, and yet they deliberately slandered it as the work of Satan. It was not merely a matter of speaking wrongly out of ignorance; having seen sufficient evidence, with stubborn hearts they turned the clear evidence of the Spirit upside down and called it evil.

Therefore the sin of blaspheming the Spirit must not be regarded as the same thing as a thought that brushes past an anxious mind or a single word blurted out wrongly in a moment. The state of a person who fears he may have committed this sin and seeks the remission of sin from God is different from that of the Pharisees in the passage. What the passage warns against is the stubborn attitude that knows the salvation of Jesus Christ which the Spirit testifies to, and yet opposes it as evil to the very end and does not repent.

If a person rejects to the very end God's own testimony that gives the remission of sins, there is no other way of salvation. For there is no Savior who can remit sins other than Jesus.

6. The tree and its fruit, the heart and words (verses 33–37)

Jesus said that if the tree is good its fruit is also good, and if the tree is bad its fruit is also bad. Just as one knows the state of a tree by its fruit, the words a person speaks reveal what is in his heart.

The Pharisees looked like godly people who kept the Law well, but with their mouths they blasphemed the work the Spirit had done, calling it the work of Satan. Their evil words

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showed the fact that their hearts were full of evil that opposed Jesus.

The words *"By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* do not mean that one is saved by the merit of speaking many good words. They mean that words become evidence in the judgment because they reveal the faith and state of the heart. Whom a person confesses Jesus to be, and how he speaks of the work of God, reveals what he is believing.

This word also teaches the fact that the words a person utters are by no means light. Even an idle word can harm another person and blaspheme God; therefore the believer must know that his words are fruit coming out of his heart, and be prudent.

7. Jesus, greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon (verses 38–42)

The scribes and Pharisees demanded that Jesus show them a sign again. But they had already seen numerous sick people healed and demon-possessed people set free. It was not that they failed to believe for lack of signs; having no heart to believe in Jesus, they still demanded more evidence.

Jesus said that no sign would be shown to the evil and adulterous generation except the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights and came out, so Jesus would die and be buried and rise again—this is what the word pointed to. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the greatest sign confirming that He is the true Christ.

The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and the queen of the South came a long way to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet the religious leaders of Jesus' day did not believe, though Jesus, greater than Jonah and greater than

Solomon, stood before their eyes. It means that those who responded even to less evidence will condemn, at the time of judgment, the generation that rejected greater evidence.

8. The danger of the house left empty and swept (verses 43–45)

Jesus told the parable of an unclean spirit that goes out of a man and, returning to find the house empty, swept, and repaired, brings in seven other spirits more wicked than itself. As a result, the last state of that man became worse than the first.

The direct object of this word's application is *"this wicked generation."* The people of Jesus' day were religiously well ordered; they kept the Law and pursued an outwardly clean life. But they did not receive Jesus into their hearts. They had put their outward appearance in order, but the house of their heart was empty.

Through moral discipline or religious life one can put away evil habits for a time, but that alone does not make a person a new man. If the heart remains empty without receiving its true Master, one can fall into deeper pride and hypocrisy than before. The Pharisees were outwardly clean, but in the end they went as far as the place of seeking to kill the Son of God.

This parable must not be used to conclude that every mental illness or hardship is the work of demons. The center of the passage is the warning that outward reform alone is not enough, and that the religious heart that has rejected Jesus can come to an even worse state.

9. The one who does the will of God is the Lord's true family (verses 46–50)

While Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, word was

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brought that His mother and brothers were waiting outside. Jesus pointed to His disciples and said, *"Here are My mother and My brothers!"* and said that the one who does the will of His Father in heaven is His brother and sister and mother.

This word does not mean that Jesus disregarded His fleshly family or His mother Mary. It means that the spiritual relationship formed in God is more fundamental than the bloodline of the flesh. Being a descendant of Abraham or being born into a religious family does not automatically make one part of God's family.

Doing the Father's will must also not be understood only as piling up good deeds and becoming God's family by that merit. It is the faith that believes the word of God and follows Jesus appearing as obedience in one's life. The person who believes in Jesus becomes part of the new family of the kingdom of God, beyond bloodline and station.

The central meaning of Matthew chapter 12

In Matthew chapter 12, the religious zeal of the Pharisees was not true faith. They kept the Sabbath but rejected Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, and exalted the temple but failed to recognize the One greater than the temple. They watched the saving work the Spirit performed and slandered it as the work of Satan, and though they had already received sufficient evidence, they demanded yet another sign.

By contrast, Jesus appeared as the Lord of mercy who does not condemn the hungry, who heals the man with the withered hand, and who does not break the bruised reed and does not quench the smoking flax. He shatters the power of Satan by the power of the Spirit, and through the sign of Jonah, death and resurrection, He confirms that He is the true Savior.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 12 exposes

the stubbornness of those who clung to outward law and religious form and rejected Jesus, and at the same time shows that Jesus is greater than the Sabbath and the temple, and that He is the Savior who brings people to life by the power of the Spirit and gives true rest and a new family.

2) Matthew chapter 12 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

In Matthew chapter 12, religious self-righteousness and God's righteousness of salvation stand in contrast to each other. The Pharisees put forward their own deed of keeping the Sabbath regulations and condemned other people, but Jesus made it plain that God desires to show mercy to sinners and to give them true rest.

This chapter itself does not record Jesus' baptism again. But to understand fully the true rest and remission of sin Jesus gives, the work of the Spirit, and the death and resurrection He spoke of as the sign of Jonah, we must look at them in connection with the fact that Jesus had earlier taken on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

1. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, gives true rest from the burden of sin (verses 1–8)

The Pharisees judged the disciples who plucked heads of grain and ate on the Sabbath to be sinners who had broken the Law. They clung to the outward regulations of the Sabbath, but they did not know the true intent with which God had given the Sabbath.

Jesus spoke of how David and those who followed him ate the showbread when they were hungry, and pointed out that the

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priests work in the temple even on the Sabbath and yet are blameless, making it plain that their condemnation was wrong. And He said, *"In this place there is One greater than the temple."*

The temple was the place where God was present and where the sinner came to God through sacrifice. But Jesus is greater than the temple. For the true Savior to whom all the sacrifices and offerings of the temple pointed is Jesus Himself.

The sacrificial offering of the Old Testament died shedding its blood after the sinner laid his hands on it and passed his sins onto it. Jesus also came to this earth to save sinners forever. The Lord took all the sins of mankind onto His own body by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River, and carried those sins and hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood. And He completed salvation by rising from the dead.

Therefore the true rest Jesus gives is not merely resting from physical work. It is the rest of heart obtained when the sinner ceases the labor of trying to save himself, asking, 'How must I wash away my sins?' and 'What must I do to escape the judgment?' and receives by faith the salvation the Lord has already accomplished.

When we believe the fact that Jesus took on all my sins through the baptism He received from John, and paid the price of those sins in full on the Cross, the burden of sin is lifted off. This is the true rest enjoyed in Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

2. *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice"* (verse 7).

The word that God desires mercy and does not desire sacrifice does not mean that all worship and sacrifice are unnecessary. It means that He does not delight in the outward religious life that puts forward one's own deeds without believing in God's mercy.

The Law was not given so that man might boast of how righteous he is. It was given so that through the Law he might realize his own sin and lack, and seek God's mercy. Yet the Pharisees used the Law as a tool for exalting themselves and condemning other people.

The greatest mercy God has shown the sinner is precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We cannot keep the Law perfectly, nor can we pay the price of our sins with our own good deeds. So the Son of God came Himself, took over our sins by receiving baptism, and received their judgment in our place on the Cross.

The faith God desires is not a faith that comes bringing its own merits. It is the faith that believes God's mercy and gives thanks, saying, "I am lacking, but the Lord has removed all my sins with His baptism and the Cross." The worship and service offered after receiving the remission of sins are also not acts paying the price of salvation, but fruits of faith offered in gratitude for the mercy already received.

3. The Lord who healed the man with a withered hand is the One who brings people to life (verses 9–14)

Jesus healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath. This was an event of healing an actual disease of the body, and we must not interpret every disease only as a symbol of sin. But in this event the condemnation of the Pharisees and the mercy of Jesus stand in vivid contrast.

The Pharisees considered their own regulations more important than the sick man. They looked for a pretext to accuse Jesus, but Jesus had compassion on that man and said, *"Stretch out your hand."* When he obeyed the Lord's word and stretched out his hand, the withered hand was restored.

The sinner cannot fully do righteous deeds by his own

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strength. However hard he tries to live well, sin keeps coming out of his heart and his conduct. But the Lord does not condemn and cast off such a person; He gives him faith through the word and makes him live a new life.

Here the order must not be reversed. It is not that a person does many good deeds and is thereby saved. He first believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and receives the remission of sins, and then a good life comes out of that faith. Works are not the condition of salvation but the fruit borne of the faith that has received salvation.

4. He does not break a bruised reed and does not quench smoking flax (verses 15–21)

Jesus did not wage a political fight against those who sought to kill Him, nor did He raise His voice to display Himself. Rather, He healed the sick people who followed Him, and worked as the Servant of God who does not break a bruised reed and does not quench smoking flax.

A bruised reed is so weak that it breaks with only a little pressure, and smoking flax is in a state where the flame has almost gone out and can hardly blaze up again. This word is a great comfort to the person who is pressed down by sin and condemnation and has no strength to rise by himself.

Jesus is not One who casts a person away, saying, “You have many sins and your faith is weak, so you are useless.” Rather, He put on a human body and came to save just such sinners. Receiving baptism from John, He took over even that person’s sins onto Himself, and He was judged in his place on the Cross.

The Lord does not demand stronger works from the person whose faith is weak; He has him look to what He Himself has accomplished. He says, “Do not try to save yourself, but

believe what I have accomplished for you." When one believes the gospel that Jesus took on all sins and received even the judgment, the bruised heart is restored and the faith that was going out comes alive again.

5. Jesus, who overcame the power of Satan by the Spirit (verses 22–30)

When Jesus healed the demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, the multitudes thought, is Jesus not the Son of David, the promised Christ? But the Pharisees slandered Him, saying that He cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

Jesus said that if Satan casts out Satan his kingdom is divided against itself and cannot stand, and He said that if He casts out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has already come.

Just as one can rescue people out of a strong man's house only after first binding the strong man, Jesus came as the One stronger than Satan. Satan holds people under condemnation and fear through sin and falsehood. He deceives a person, saying, "You are still a sinner," and, "You must do more works to be able to be saved."

But Jesus shattered Satan's falsehood with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If the Lord took over all the sins of the world through the hands of John the Baptist and received the full punishment of those sins on the Cross, no sin can remain to condemn the person who believes.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the fact that Jesus completed salvation with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. When a person believes this word and receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit comes upon his heart, and he becomes a child of God.

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6. What is the sin of blaspheming the Spirit (verses 31–32)

The sin of blaspheming the Spirit must be understood in its context. The Pharisees directly saw Jesus healing people and driving back the power of Satan by the power of the Spirit, and yet they deliberately slandered it as a work done by the ruler of the demons. It was not that they could not believe for lack of evidence; in order not to receive Jesus, they turned the clear work of the Spirit upside down and called it evil.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, blasphemy against the Spirit is the attitude that stubbornly rejects the salvation of Jesus which the Spirit testifies to, and opposes it as something evil. The Spirit testifies that Jesus took on the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of that sin on the Cross, and saved sinners by rising again.

If a person rejects this testimony to the very end and even slanders it as falsehood, he cannot receive the remission of sins. For there is no other way to remove sin apart from the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The reason he fails to receive the remission of sins is not that God's mercy is insufficient, but that he rejects to the very end the only way of the remission of sin.

But a person who doubted for a moment, or spoke wrongly out of ignorance, or fears whether he may have committed the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, must not be condemned outright as one who cannot receive the remission of sins. If he realizes his fault and has a heart that turns back and wants to believe the gospel, he is different from the stubborn attitude of the Pharisees shown in the passage. The Lord does not turn away the person who repents and comes out to Him.

7. A good tree and good fruit begin from the faith of the heart (verses 33–37)

Jesus said that if the tree is good its fruit is also good, and if the tree is bad its fruit is also bad. The Pharisees seemed outwardly to keep the Law well, but with their mouths they slandered what the Spirit had done, calling it the work of Satan. Their words revealed that their hearts were full of evil that opposed Jesus.

A person's words are the fruit in which the faith in the heart appears outwardly. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart confesses that Jesus has washed away his sins completely. Conversely, if a person says he believes in Jesus and yet confesses, "There is still sin in my heart," he has not yet fully received the word that the Lord took on all sins.

The words *"By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* do not mean that if one says a particular sentence, one is saved by the merit of those words. They mean that what one believes with the heart is revealed through one's words. A true confession comes not from a memorized formula, but when one believes with the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism and blood.

Becoming a good tree does not begin with forcing out good words and good conduct. One must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the washing of the sins of the heart, and receive the righteousness of God. Then from that faith appear the fruits of thanksgiving and love and serving the gospel.

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8. The sign of Jonah points to Jesus' death and resurrection (verses 38–42)

The scribes and Pharisees had already seen many miracles, yet they demanded a sign again. They sought a sign not in order to believe, but in order to test and judge Jesus by their own standard.

Jesus said that there was no sign to show them except the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights and came out, so Jesus would die and be buried and rise again—this is what the word pointed to.

The death and resurrection of Jesus are the greatest sign of salvation God has given. But the death of the Cross must not be taken apart and considered by itself. For before Jesus hung on the Cross, He had already shouldered all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John.

If Jesus had not taken on the sins, the death of the Cross could not be the judgment for our sins. But the Lord took over the sins of mankind by receiving baptism, and carried those sins and died on the Cross. And by rising on the third day, He showed that the price of sin and death had been paid completely.

Therefore the sign of Jonah does not mean merely the astonishing event of a man dying and coming back to life. It is the evidence of the gospel that Jesus judged on the Cross the sins He had taken on with the baptism received from John the Baptist, and completed the salvation of sinners by rising again.

The men of Nineveh repented at hearing the preaching of Jonah, and the queen of the South came a long way to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet the people of Jesus' day did not believe, though Jesus, greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon, stood before their eyes. Today too, if we seek only special experiences and feelings above the word and do not

believe the recorded gospel, we can commit the same error.

9. The word of the gospel must enter the heart that is empty and swept (verses 43–45)

Jesus told the parable of the unclean spirit that, having gone out, sees the house empty, swept, and repaired, and comes back bringing seven other spirits more wicked than itself. This word was directly a warning toward the wicked generation of that day that had rejected Jesus.

Through religious training and moral effort one can tidy up one's outward appearance cleanly. One can give up drink or evil habits and live decently. But if the gospel of the remission of sin is not in the heart and there is no faith that believes in Jesus, the soul is like an empty house.

The expression *"dry places"* here need not be interpreted as necessarily a direct symbol of Jesus' baptism. The center of the passage is that the experience of a demon having gone out, or outward tidying alone, is not enough. Jesus, the true Master, and His word must dwell in that person's heart.

When a person receives into his heart the word that Jesus took on my sins through the baptism He received from John and ended the judgment of sin on the Cross, he receives the remission of sins. Upon the heart whose sins have been washed away the Holy Spirit comes, and the word of God takes the center of that heart.

Therefore even the person who has received the remission of sins must keep holding the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart as he lives. Whenever his lack is exposed, he must not think that he has become a sinner again, but must confirm through the word the fact that Jesus has already taken on even that lack and sin.

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10. The one who does the will of God is Jesus' true family (verses 46–50)

Jesus pointed to His disciples and said that the one who does the will of His heavenly Father is His brother and sister and mother. This was not despising His fleshly family; it means that the relationship of the kingdom of God formed by faith is more fundamental than bloodline.

Being a person fleshly close to Jesus' family does not automatically make one a child of God. Neither does one receive the remission of sins because one has long attended church or was born into a believing family. Each person must believe with his own heart the salvation Jesus accomplished.

God's will is to save sinners in His Son. God the Father sent Jesus; Jesus took on all our sins by receiving baptism from John; and He completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection. The Holy Spirit testifies that this fact is the truth.

The person who believes this righteousness of God and has received the remission of sins is a child of God and the spiritual family of Jesus. And doing the Father's will does not mean earning the qualification of family by one's own deeds. One first believes the gospel and becomes God's family, and then obeys the word and lives according to that faith.

To sum up the whole

Matthew chapter 12 reveals the difference between the faith of the Pharisees, who put forward their own deeds and religious regulations, and the faith that believes the righteousness of God which Jesus accomplished. The Pharisees kept the Sabbath yet failed to recognize the Lord of the Sabbath, and exalted the temple yet rejected Jesus who is greater than the temple. They watched the saving work the Spirit performed and slandered it as the work of Satan, and

though they had received sufficient evidence, they kept demanding another sign.

But Jesus is the One who shows mercy to the sinner who cannot keep the Law and gives him true rest. The Lord took on all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, carried those sins and was judged on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of sins, receives the Holy Spirit into his heart, and becomes part of God's family.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 12 is the word telling us not to judge Jesus with the form of the law and self-righteousness, but to believe in Jesus who saved sinners with the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and so to receive true rest and the remission of sins and become part of God's family. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 12

Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, gives true rest to sinners

Introduction

Matthew chapter 12 begins with the Sabbath controversy. When Jesus' disciples, passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, were hungry and plucked heads of grain and ate, the Pharisees accused this as a matter of breaking the Sabbath. They also sought to accuse Jesus for healing a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. But Jesus, citing the matter of David and the showbread and the example of the priests who work on the Sabbath, declared that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath. God's purpose in giving the Sabbath was not to condemn people but to bring people to life and give them rest.

Jesus rebuked them, saying that if they had known the meaning of the words *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice,"* they would not have condemned the guiltless. As Isaiah prophesied, Jesus came as the Servant of God who does not break a bruised reed and does not quench smoking flax. He is the One who does not trample with condemnation the person broken down by sin and wounds, but restores him with compassion and leads him until He sends forth justice to victory.

In the Beelzebub controversy that follows, the Pharisees slandered Jesus, saying that He cast out demons by the ruler of the demons. But Jesus said that He casts out demons by the Spirit of God, and that this is the evidence that the kingdom of God has already come. The sin of rejecting and blaspheming to

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the very end the saving work the Spirit testifies to does not receive remission. Moreover, as a good tree bears good fruit, what fills the heart comes out of the mouth, and so a person's words reveal the faith of his heart.

To the scribes and Pharisees who sought a sign, Jesus said that there was nothing to show them except the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, Jesus too would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth and then rise. The sign of Jonah points to Jesus' death and resurrection, that is, the gospel of salvation. And the parable of the house left empty and swept after the unclean spirit went out warns that the word of the gospel must enter the heart, not a religious life that merely sweeps sin aside for a time. And Jesus said that the one who does the will of God is His brother and sister and mother.

The true rest Jesus gives is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus took on all the sins of the world by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, received all the judgment by carrying those sins and dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and overcame the power of sin and death by rising from the dead. Man does not obtain rest by keeping the works of the law and religious regulations; by believing this gospel that Jesus completed, he is delivered from the burden of sin and enters true rest.

Matthew chapter 12 clearly testifies how different the faith that judges Jesus with the form of the law and self-righteousness is from the faith that believes the righteousness of God Jesus accomplished. Now, examining the words of the passage in order, let us look into how Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, brings sinners to life, and what grace He gives to the person who receives the testimony of the Spirit.

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Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, gives true rest not with the condemnation of the law but with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!' But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'" (Matthew 12:1–8).

Jesus' disciples, passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, were hungry and plucked heads of grain and ate. The Pharisees interpreted this act as the labor of harvesting and threshing, and accused them to Jesus, saying, *"Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"* They did not look at the disciples' hunger; they condemned them only by the standard of the Sabbath rules they themselves had laid down.

God's original purpose in giving the Sabbath was not to oppress or condemn people. It was given to give rest to man under sin and toil, and to have him believe the fact that all life and salvation come from God. But the Pharisees failed to discover God's mercy through the Sabbath, and turned it into a

religious standard for judging other people.

Jesus spoke of how David and those who followed him, when they were starving, entered the house of God and ate the showbread. The showbread was bread originally set apart for only the priests to eat. But God did not condemn the starving David and his company for eating that bread. This does not mean that God's commandment is meaningless; it means that within the true meaning of the commandment is contained God's mercy that brings people to life and has compassion on them.

The showbread spiritually represents the living word of God. Man is not a being who needs only the bread of the body; he is a being who must eat the word of God that brings his soul to life out of sin. As David and those who followed him ate the showbread and preserved their lives, so the sinner today must receive into his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit which God has given, and obtain eternal life.

Jesus also said that the priests work in the temple even on the Sabbath in order to offer the sacrifices, and yet are without sin. If the priests who work in the temple on the Sabbath are not condemned, then the disciples who were with Jesus, who is greater than the temple, could not be condemned. For the temple service of the priests was work that fulfilled the purpose of the Sabbath, and the disciples' following Jesus was also a taking part in God's work of salvation.

When Jesus said, *"In this place there is One greater than the temple,"* it means that He is not a mere teacher of the law or a prophet but God, the Owner of the temple. The temple and the sacrificial system were a shadow showing beforehand Jesus Christ who was to come and the salvation He would accomplish. As the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament took on the sinner's sins and shed its blood, Jesus became the

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eternal High Priest of mankind and at the same time the true sacrificial offering who took on the sins of all people.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God's mercy appeared perfectly in Jesus Christ. Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit and come clothed in a human body, took over all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And shouldering the sin of the world, He hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, receiving all the judgment of sin, and by rising from the dead He gave us eternal life.

When Jesus said, *"I desire mercy and not sacrifice,"* it does not mean that God abolishes all sacrifice or worship itself. It means that God does not want people to boast of religious ceremony and works while not knowing His will of salvation. At the center of the sacrifice were the offering that was sacrificed in the sinner's place and God's mercy that brought the sinner to life through that sacrifice. But the Pharisees held only to the form of the sacrifice and boasted that they kept God's law well, while they did not know God's heart that pities and saves sinners.

The Law is not a tool for making one boast how righteous one is, but the word that makes every person realize the fact that he is a sinner. Because man cannot keep the Law perfectly, he cannot become righteous before God by his own deeds. What God desires is not that we put forward our good deeds and religious zeal, but that we admit our sins and receive by faith the mercy of salvation God has bestowed.

That mercy of salvation is contained in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. Through His baptism Jesus took on all our sins once and for all, and on the Cross He received the punishment of those sins in our place. Therefore the person who believes this salvation

does not rely on his own works, but receives the remission of sins by believing the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished. This is the faith that receives the mercy God desires more than sacrifice.

It is also important that Jesus said, *"You would not have condemned the guiltless."* The disciples were guiltless not because their conduct was always perfect, but because they were with Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, and acted within His will. In the same way, the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit also does not become a righteous person because his own conduct is perfect. Because Jesus took on all that person's sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the Cross, God acknowledges the one who believes as a righteous person without sin.

The words *"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"* are the declaration that Jesus is the Savior who gives true rest. Merely keeping a particular day formally cannot give the soul rest from sin. If sin remains as it is, however faithfully one keeps religious regulations, condemnation and fear continue in the conscience. But when one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus took on all our sins and received the judgment, one obtains the rest of faith, that there is no longer anything to be judged for because of sin.

This word does not mean that we may ignore the Law and live as we please. Salvation is received not as the reward of keeping the Law but by believing God's mercy; yet the saved person, in gratitude for that mercy, must honor the word of God and live with compassion toward other people. To leave the Pharisees' faith that condemns others by the standard of one's own deeds, and to believe the remission of sins received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and bring weak

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souls to life, is the faith that follows the will of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus does not condemn the sinner who is like a bruised reed, but restores him wholly with the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust.'" (Matthew 12:9–21).

When Jesus entered the synagogue, there was a man with one withered hand. That the hand was withered speaks of a

state in which the blood does not flow, the hand has lost its vitality, and it cannot move properly. Jesus had compassion on this man, but the Pharisees set their interest on finding an occasion to accuse Jesus rather than on that man's suffering. Their asking *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"* was not in order to learn the truth but in order to gain grounds for accusing Jesus.

Jesus said, would you not lay hold of even one sheep and lift it out if it fell into a pit on the Sabbath? People would stretch out their hands even on the Sabbath to save a sheep that was their own property, and yet they denounced healing a suffering person as breaking the Law. This shows that while they seemed to keep the Law, in reality they put their own interests first and had lost God's heart that pities people.

In the words *"Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep?"* the heart of God that counts one soul precious is revealed. God's purpose in giving the Sabbath was not to oppress and condemn people but to preserve life and give true rest. Therefore doing good on the Sabbath and bringing a life back was not a matter of breaking the Sabbath but a matter of fulfilling its original intent.

When Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, *"Stretch out your hand,"* he believed the word and stretched out his own withered hand. By his own strength he could not make his hand whole, but when he stretched it out relying on Jesus' word, it was restored like the other hand. This miracle is a sign showing the fact that Jesus is not merely a man of power who heals diseases of the body, but the Savior who brings wholly to life the soul that has lost its vitality because of sin.

The figure of the man with the withered hand brings to mind the spiritual state of man under sin. Man tries to achieve good and do the righteousness of God with his own efforts, but

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the soul that has not solved its sin cannot bear the true fruit of righteousness, like a withered hand. However much he tries to wash his sins with religious works and repeated prayers of repentance, the sin and condemnation of the heart do not disappear. Only when he first believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and receives the remission of sins does his soul come alive and become able to serve God.

Yet the Pharisees did not rejoice that the man had been restored whole; they went outside and discussed how they might kill Jesus. Under the pretext of keeping the Sabbath they condemned Jesus who brought a man to life, while in their very hearts they planned murder. This is the contradiction of legalism that has lost God's mercy. If one keeps outward regulations and yet rejects the Son of God and the salvation He bestows, that faith becomes a religion that condemns and kills people rather than bringing them to life.

Jesus knew their scheme and left that place. When many people followed Him, the Lord healed their sicknesses, but He warned them not to make Him known. Jesus was not One who came to gain fame from people or build a political force by using His power. Unlike the leaders of the world who quarrel and display themselves with a loud voice, He came as the Servant who quietly saves sinners in obedience to God's will.

Matthew explains that this was the fulfilling of the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. *"My Servant whom I have chosen"* and *"My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased"* refer to Jesus Christ, sent by God the Father. Jesus is the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit and come clothed in a human body, the Savior who came to this earth to fulfill the Father's will. The word that God gives Him His Spirit means that Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, would make God's salvation and righteous judgment known to the whole world.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the history of salvation God accomplished through Jesus Christ to bring sinners to life. Jesus, with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, took onto His own body all the sins mankind commits, beginning from Adam until the end of the world. And shouldering those sins, He hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, receiving all the punishment of sin, and by rising from the dead He became the eternal Savior of those who believe.

In the words *"A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench"* is contained the heart of Jesus toward the person bruised and worn out by sin and pain. The bruised reed and the smoking flax refer to the person who has almost lost the strength to stand up by himself, and his spiritual life and hope. The world and legalism judge such a person worthless and cast him away, but Jesus does not break him or quench him; He brings him to life again.

It is not that Jesus does not condemn the sinner because He counts sin as nothing much. Because the penalty of death must surely follow sin, the Lord Himself took over that sin with the baptism He received from John, and was judged in the sinner's place on the Cross. Jesus' mercy is not an emotional sympathy that simply covers sin over; it is the sacrificial love that bore the sinner's punishment with His own body and saved him completely.

As the man with the withered hand became whole when he believed Jesus' word and stretched out his hand, so also the bruised soul is restored from sin when it believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart. There is no need to despair that one has too many sins to be saved, or to think that one cannot come to the Lord because one's faith is weak and lacking. Jesus has already solved the whole problem of sin with

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the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and therefore whoever believes that word can receive the remission of sins and new life.

The words *"Till He sends forth justice to victory"* mean that Jesus' saving work surely triumphs. Jesus suffered people's hatred and the death of the Cross, but by rising again He overcame the power of sin and death and the devil. In the end He will give eternal life to those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and will carry out righteous judgment on those who do not believe, and so establish God's justice completely.

The words *"In His name Gentiles will trust"* mean that Jesus' salvation does not stay with the nation of Israel alone. Whether Jew or Gentile, regardless of station and nation and past sins, the person who believes in the name of Jesus and receives the salvation He accomplished becomes God's people. The gospel Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection is the gospel of salvation for every sinner of the world.

Therefore we must not condemn weak people by the standard of our own religious works, as the Pharisees did. First we must remember the fact that we ourselves were sinners like a bruised reed and smoking flax, but were saved by the Lord's mercy. And to the person fallen in sin and despair we must deliver, not condemnation first, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus took on all sins and was judged. When one believes this completed salvation with the heart, the soul like a withered hand comes alive, the faith that was going out brightens again, and one comes to obtain true rest and hope in Jesus Christ.

Believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit which the Holy Spirit testifies to is the way to enter the kingdom of God

"Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. 'Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man

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out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.'" (Matthew 12:22–37).

People brought to Jesus a man who was demon-possessed, blind, and mute. When Jesus healed him, he came to speak and to see. Jesus, who performed this miracle, is not One who merely has power to heal diseases; He is the Son of God, greater than the power of Satan that holds people fast. The multitudes' saying *"Could this be the Son of David?"* means, is Jesus not the Messiah God promised?

This man's bodily state also brings to mind the spiritual state of man under sin. Because of sin, man became a spiritual blind man who cannot see God and the salvation He accomplished, and became like a mute who cannot confess true faith before God. If one does not know who Jesus is, and why He received baptism and why He hung on the Cross, one is failing to see the spiritual truth.

The Pharisees saw Jesus' power directly and yet slandered it, saying that He cast out demons by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons. It was not that they lacked evidence to believe. Because acknowledging Jesus' power would have meant laying down their own religious authority and righteousness, they deliberately distorted the work of God into the work of Satan. Their problem lay not in a lack of knowledge but in self-righteousness and a stubborn heart.

Jesus said that if Satan casts out Satan, his kingdom is divided against itself and will fall. That Satan should of himself set free a person he has seized does not stand to reason. Jesus' casting out demons was possible not because He was on Satan's side, but because He is the Son of God who has

overcome the power of Satan.

The words *"If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you"* mean that with Jesus' coming the reign of God has appeared. Jesus' casting out demons and healing the sick was the sign that the kingdom of God had come. But the fundamental way of entering that kingdom lies not in having the body healed, but in believing the salvation Jesus accomplished and receiving the remission of sins.

The *"strong man"* of whom Jesus spoke refers to Satan, who holds people fast with sin and falsehood. To enter the strong man's house and carry off his goods, one must first bind that strong man. Jesus came as the One stronger than Satan: He took on all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and by rising again overcame the power of sin and death and saved the souls that had been held by Satan. Jesus' baptism and Cross and resurrection looked outwardly like defeat, but in reality they were the victory of God that shattered the power of Satan.

This salvation was accomplished by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus, the Son of God conceived by the Holy Spirit and come clothed in a human body, took over all the sins of mankind onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Then, shouldering the sin of the world, He hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, receiving all the punishment of sin, and by rising from the dead He overcame the power of sin and death and Satan.

The words *"He who is not with Me is against Me"* mean that there is no neutral position in the matter of Jesus and salvation. Either one believes and receives the salvation Jesus accomplished, or one holds to one's own thoughts and

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righteousness and rejects it—one of the two. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and gathers souls to Jesus is a person who is with the Lord, but the person who distorts this gospel and blocks people from believing is a person who scatters.

Jesus said that every sin and blasphemy of men can receive remission, but the blasphemy against the Spirit does not receive remission. This does not mean that Jesus failed to take on some particular sin. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took on every sin of every person in the world, murder and adultery and lying included, and He paid the price of those sins completely on the Cross. Therefore any sinner whatsoever can receive the remission of sins if he believes this gospel.

What then is the sin of blaspheming the Spirit? In the context of this passage it refers to the stubbornness of the Pharisees who saw the clear saving work the Spirit performed through Jesus and deliberately opposed it as the work of Satan. More fundamentally, it is rejecting and blaspheming to the very end the salvation of Jesus Christ which the Spirit testifies to, that is, the truth that the Lord removed all sins with His baptism and the Cross and the resurrection.

The Holy Spirit is not One who merely stirs up mysterious feelings in a person's heart without any ground. The Spirit testifies through the recorded word who Jesus is and by what method He saved sinners. Making people believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that Jesus took on all sins and received their judgment, is the Spirit's important work. Therefore, knowingly distorting this testimony of salvation and blocking people from believing it is what blasphemes the work of the Spirit.

The sin of blaspheming the Spirit is not the same as a bad thought arising for a moment, a doubt from weak faith, or a

wrong word spoken by mistake. To the person who fears whether he may have committed this sin and seeks salvation, the Lord is calling out to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The problem is not the heart that wants to repent and believe, but the heart that stubbornly rejects the only way of salvation the Spirit testifies to and opposes it to the very end. If one rejects the gospel itself, which gives the remission of sins, there is no other way of the remission of sin, and so that person cannot receive remission.

The words *"Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him"* mean that even the person who opposed Jesus for a time, not knowing Him, has the opportunity to turn back and believe. Even one who persecuted Jesus can be saved if he realizes his own wrong and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But if a person knows the truth of salvation the Spirit has plainly testified to and rejects it to the very end, he is spurning for himself the only remission of sin given to him.

Jesus went on to speak of the tree and its fruit. Only when the tree is good can it bear good fruit. A tree bearing bad fruit does not become a good tree by the training of works alone. One must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the washing of all the sins of the heart, and receive the Holy Spirit, and so become a good tree. After that, from the righteousness of God received in the heart and the gratitude of salvation, come the confession of faith and good fruit.

Becoming a good tree does not mean that the deeds of the flesh become perfect and one never fails again. It means that one has believed the righteousness of Jesus accomplished with the baptism received from John the Baptist and the Cross, received the remission of sins, and become a child of God. Even the born-again person has the lack of the flesh, but in his

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heart are the faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the Holy Spirit. Therefore he can confess the good gospel that Jesus has removed all sins, and take part in the work of saving other souls.

By contrast, because the Pharisees had heaped up envy and self-righteousness and unbelief in their hearts, even when Jesus performed the work of bringing a person to life, they said it was the work of a demon. As the words *"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"* say, a person's words reveal what he is believing in his heart. If one says with the lips that he honors God and yet rejects the salvation Jesus accomplished, those words reveal the unbelief that is in the heart.

The words *"By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned"* do not mean that if one speaks well, one is saved by the merit of it. Because what is believed with the heart is confessed with the mouth, a person's words reveal that faith. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart confesses that Jesus took on all his sins and saved him. On the other hand, the person who rejects this salvation reveals his own unbelief with words that deny and oppose the work of Jesus.

Therefore we must not stay at fearing a slip of a single word, but must look into what gospel our heart is believing. We must receive with the heart the word of salvation, that Jesus took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit which the Holy Spirit testifies to, our spiritual eyes are opened, we confess true salvation with our mouths, and we escape from the power of Satan and live as the people of the kingdom of God.

We must believe the sign of Jesus' death and resurrection and receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit into our hearts

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. 'When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.'" (Matthew 12:38–45).

The scribes and Pharisees demanded that Jesus show them a sign. But they were not people who had seen no sign at all until then. They had already seen and heard the power of Jesus healing the sick, setting free the demon-possessed, and restoring the blind and mute. Nevertheless they would not believe, and demanded yet another sign.

The person who has no heart to believe keeps demanding

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new evidence however many miracles he sees. On the other hand, the person who intends to receive the word of God realizes through the recorded word who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished, and believes. True faith is not something that arises only when a mysterious thing happens before one's eyes; it is receiving with the heart the word of salvation God has recorded.

Jesus' calling them *"an evil and adulterous generation"* was not pointing out fleshly immorality alone. He was rebuking the spiritual adultery of serving God in name while not believing the Son God sent, and following one's own thoughts and religious righteousness. Seeking God with the lips while refusing God's salvation with the heart is the figure of the evil and adulterous generation.

Jesus told them, *"No sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."* The event of Jonah being in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights and coming out again showed beforehand the work of Jesus dying, being buried, and rising on the third day. The most decisive sign Jesus gives is not a miracle that satisfies people's curiosity, but the work of dying and rising again for the salvation of sinners.

But Jesus' death cannot be understood apart from His having taken on the sin of the world through His baptism. Jesus, conceived by the Holy Spirit and come clothed in a human body, took over all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Then, as the Lamb of God shouldering the sin of the world, He hung on the Cross and died shedding His blood, receiving all the punishment of sin, and by rising on the third day He completed the eternal salvation of those who believe.

Therefore the sign of Jonah does not mean looking at Jesus' Cross and resurrection as one isolated event. It means believing

the whole history of salvation: that Jesus took on all our sins with His baptism, died on the Cross because of those sins, and justified us by rising again. This is the greatest and most complete sign of salvation God has shown to sinners.

The men of Nineveh heard the word of judgment Jonah preached and repented. They did not keep demanding miracles of Jonah; they admitted the fact that they were sinners deserving God's judgment, and humbled their hearts before the word. But the scribes and Pharisees did not repent though Jesus, greater than Jonah, spoke to them directly and performed mighty works. That is why He said that at the time of judgment the men of Nineveh would rise up as witnesses exposing that generation's unbelief.

The true repentance spoken of in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not merely regretting one's wrongs or repeatedly begging to have one's sins remitted. It is laying down one's own judgment and one's own righteousness, and returning to the way of salvation God has established. Believing with the heart the fact that Jesus took on all my sins with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again—this is the true repentance that turns back from unbelief.

The queen of the South came from a far land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. But before the scribes and Pharisees stood Jesus, greater than Solomon. Solomon was a king who received wisdom from God, but Jesus is the very wisdom of God and the Son of God who created the whole world. The queen of the South came a long way and listened to Solomon's words, but the Pharisees would not receive even the word of Jesus sounding right before them.

This word makes us look back at the heart with which we today treat the recorded word. A person may seek special

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dreams and visions and miraculous experiences, and yet treat lightly the word of Jesus' baptism and Cross and resurrection recorded in the Scriptures. But what washes away a person's sins is not a mysterious experience or feeling, but the faith that believes the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Jesus went on to tell the parable of the man from whom the unclean spirit went out and to whom it returned. That spirit went about through waterless, desolate places and came back to the house from which it had gone out. And finding the house empty, swept, and put in order, it went and brought seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they entered and dwelt there. As a result, the last state of that man became worse than the first.

Here the house brings to mind a person's heart. That the house was swept clean and repaired represents a state in which the outward life has changed and a religious appearance has been put on, but God, the Master of the heart, and the word of salvation are absent. Cutting off bad habits like drink or gambling and striving to live decently is a good thing, but with that alone one does not receive the remission of sins and become born again. If sin remains in a person's heart and the Holy Spirit does not dwell there, that heart is still like an empty house without its master.

"Dry places" literally speaks of the desolate places where the demon cannot find rest, but from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit it also brings to mind the heart that is without the word of the gospel, the water of life. If a person believes in Jesus only religiously, and does not believe the word that the Lord took on all sins with His baptism, sin remains as it is in his heart. In a heart that has sin the Holy Spirit cannot dwell, and with human resolution and moral effort alone one cannot fundamentally overcome the deception

of the evil spirits.

Therefore what matters is not leaving the heart empty, but believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving into that heart the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. When one believes the word that Jesus removed all my sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to that person's heart. Then his heart is no longer an empty house without a master, but becomes the temple of God where the Holy Spirit dwells.

That seven spirits more wicked came in is not telling us to calculate the number of the demons themselves; it is the warning that one falls into a far more severe spiritual bondage than before. If one has experienced God's grace and heard the word and yet does not receive Jesus, the heart can grow all the more stubborn. Even if the outward religious appearance improves, if one rejects the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one's self-righteousness and false assurance grow stronger, and one can come to a state in which it is harder than at first to receive the truth.

The words *"So shall it also be with this wicked generation"* were the warning toward the Israel of that day. They received temporary help through Jesus' power and heard numerous words, but they did not receive Jesus as the Savior. As a result their hearts stood empty, and in the end they fell into the greater evil of nailing the Son of God to the Cross. It plainly reveals that outward purity and religious zeal alone cannot save the soul.

Therefore we must not stay at seeking new signs and experiences, but must believe the sign of Jonah God has already given. We must receive into our hearts the word that Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John,

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died on the Cross, and rose again. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, all sins are washed away and the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart, and that person is protected from Satan's enticement and gains the strength to live following the word of God. This is the way to leave the heart that is like an empty house and become the house of God where the Holy Spirit dwells.

The person who believes and follows the will of God the Father is the true spiritual family of Jesus

"While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'" (Matthew 12:46–50).

While Jesus was delivering the word to the multitudes, His mother and brothers in the flesh stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. When one person made that fact known to Him, Jesus asked, *"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"* and stretched out His hand and pointed to His disciples. And He said that the one who does the will of His Father in heaven is His brother and sister and mother.

This word does not mean that Jesus denied His fleshly mother and brothers or did not care for His family. Jesus kept God's word to honor one's parents, and even on the Cross He

entrusted His mother to a disciple. What Jesus teaches here is the fact that there is a relationship more eternal and more essential than the blood ties of the flesh.

People become a family of the flesh when they are born of the same parents. But to become God's family, one must be born anew from God. One does not become a child of God by fleshly lineage or people, religious background, or church office alone. Only by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receiving the remission of sins, and receiving the Holy Spirit does one become the spiritual family that calls God Father.

Even the fact of being Jesus' fleshly family does not of itself guarantee salvation. One does not become a child of God by the mere fact of having lived near Jesus or having seen His miracles directly. One must believe with the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished. Today also, more important than the fact that one has long attended church or is a pastor's family member is whether one truly believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

To become one *"who does the will of My Father in heaven"* is first to believe in Jesus Christ whom God sent and in the salvation He accomplished. God's most fundamental will is not that sinners strive to become righteous with their own deeds, but that they believe the salvation God completed through His Son and receive the remission of sins. Doing the will of God begins not with a person obtaining salvation by his own righteous deeds, but with believing the righteousness God has accomplished.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the salvation God the Father planned in order to make mankind His own children. Jesus, the Son of God conceived by the Holy Spirit and come clothed in flesh, took on all the sins of mankind onto His own

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body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And shouldering those sins, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving all the punishment of sin, and by rising from the dead He completed the eternal salvation of those who believe.

Therefore the first step of doing the Father's will is to receive with the heart the fact that Jesus removed all my sins through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. When one believes this salvation, one receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and God makes that person His own child. And those who have believed the same gospel and received the same Spirit become one family in Jesus Christ.

Jesus called His disciples His family not because the disciples' fleshly conduct was perfect. The disciples too had many lacks and weaknesses, but they heard Jesus' word, believed, and followed Him. Jesus acknowledged as His own family not the Pharisees who put forward their own righteousness and opposed the Lord, but the disciples who received the word and followed.

Therefore God's family do not judge one another by the world's learning, wealth, or position. Though one person has learned much and another has learned little, if all have believed the same gospel of the water and the Spirit and become the children of one Father, they are brothers and sisters to one another. Though nationality and people and language differ, in Jesus Christ they are the same spiritual family.

In the words *"is My brother and sister and mother"* is contained also how God's family are to treat one another. Family do not try to use the other to gain their own profit; when there is hardship they ache together and look to what the other needs. In the same way, those born again of the gospel of

the water and the Spirit must build up one another's faith, hold up the weak, and serve and deliver the gospel together.

But becoming God's family does not consist merely in calling one another brother or sister. We must believe the will of the same Father and fulfill that will together. The person saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit helps other souls also hear this gospel and receive the remission of sins, seeks the good of one another within the church, and uses his gifts and his life for the work in which God delights.

The life of doing the Father's will is not a price paid in order to be saved. Because Jesus first removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the Cross, it is the life of the saved person who lives in gratitude for that love. One does not become God's family by works; one becomes family by believing the gospel, and because one has become family, one lives following the Father's will.

This word must not be used as grounds for the idea that one may neglect one's fleshly family. The saved person loves and cares for his fleshly family as well, and must deliver to them the most precious gospel of the water and the Spirit. But when the demands of family and the word of God collide, one must follow God's will before blood ties. For the relationships of the flesh end in this world, but the relationship formed by the gospel of the water and the Spirit continues forever even in the kingdom of God.

Therefore we must not be content with the fact that we merely belong to a church, but must look into whether we believe with the heart the salvation God the Father accomplished through the Son. The person who believes Jesus' baptism and Cross and resurrection and has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit is a child of God and the spiritual family of Jesus. And loving one another in that faith

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and delivering the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world is the way of living that follows the will of the Father in heaven. ✉

Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 12

[Question] 1. What are the structural characteristics of Matthew chapter 12?

Matthew chapter 12 is structured so that the ministry of Jesus and the opposition of the Pharisees gradually come into collision. It shows that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and the One who brings about the kingdom of God by the power of the Spirit, and at the same time it exposes the stubbornness of the religious leaders who reject this.

The structure can be divided as follows.

1. The Sabbath controversy and the healing of the sick (verses 1–14)

Through the matter of the disciples plucking heads of grain and eating on the Sabbath, and Jesus healing the man with a withered hand, He teaches the true meaning of the Sabbath.

2. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled (verses 15–21)

It makes plain that Jesus' gentle character and saving ministry are the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

3. The power that cast out demons and the Pharisees' accusation (verses 22–30)

When Jesus heals a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, the Pharisees accuse Him of relying on the ruler of the demons.

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4. The sin of blaspheming the Spirit and the judgment on words (verses 31–37)

He warns of the sin of deliberately attributing the work of the Spirit to evil, and teaches that a person's words reveal the state of his heart and become the grounds of judgment.

5. The sign of Jonah and the unrepentant generation (verses 38–45)

To those who seek a sign He presents the sign of Jonah, and He warns of the judgment the wicked, unrepentant generation will receive.

6. The true family of Jesus (verses 46–50)

He says that the person who does the will of God is the true spiritual family of Jesus.

Therefore the structural characteristic of Matthew chapter 12 is that it shows in contrast the authority of Jesus and the coming of the kingdom of God, the rejection and judgment of the Pharisees, and the true people who believe in Jesus and do the will of God.

[Question] 2. Matthew 12:1—what kind of day is the Sabbath spoken of in the Scriptures?

The Sabbath is the day set apart as holy in commemoration of the seventh day, on which God rested after finishing creation. *"Sabbath"* means ceasing from work and resting.

1. The origin of the Sabbath

The origin of the Sabbath is in God's work of creation.

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He

had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:2–3).

God's rest does not mean that He rested because He was tired; it means that He had completely finished His work of creation.

2. The Sabbath as it appears in the Law

Through the Ten Commandments God commanded the people of Israel to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:8–10).

The Sabbath was a day given so that not only the people but also the servants and the livestock and the stranger would stop their work and rest. It was a day of grace for remembering and worshiping God, and for letting every person enjoy rest.

3. The true meaning of the Sabbath that Jesus made plain

The Pharisees interpreted the Sabbath in an excessively formal way and made it a heavy burden on people. But Jesus made it plain that He Himself is the Lord of the Sabbath.

"For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'" (Matthew 12:8).

He also said that it is right to save life and do good even on the Sabbath.

"Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12).

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Therefore the Sabbath is not a day for condemning and oppressing people, but a day for remembering God, obtaining rest of body and soul, and showing compassion and goodness to one's neighbor. Jesus taught the fact that a person's life and God's compassion are more important than the regulations of the Sabbath.

[Question] 3. Matthew 12:1–2—what conduct of the disciples on the Sabbath did the Pharisees take issue with and protest to Jesus?

The Pharisees, seeing that Jesus' disciples, being hungry, plucked heads of grain and ate on the Sabbath, protested to Jesus.

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'" (Matthew 12:1–2).

The Pharisees judged the disciples' act of plucking the heads of grain to be labor done on the Sabbath, and denounced them for breaking the Sabbath regulation. But they put the rules and forms they themselves had made before the compassion and will of God who gave the Sabbath.

[Question] 4. Why did He cite as examples the matter of David eating the showbread, and of the priests being without sin though they profane the Sabbath in the temple?

Jesus cited the following two examples to point out the Pharisees' wrong view of the Sabbath.

The matter of David and his company eating the showbread: when David and those who were with him were hungry, they entered the house of God and ate the showbread that only the priests could eat.

The matter of the priests working in the temple on the Sabbath: the priests did the work of offering the sacrifices in the temple even on the Sabbath, but they were without sin.

"But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" (Matthew 12:3–5).

These two cases testify that the Sabbath regulation must not be put before a person's life and needs, and that serving God and caring for life are not things to be condemned even on the Sabbath. The Pharisees stressed only the form of the Law, but Jesus taught the compassion and will of God contained within it.

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[Question] 5. Matthew 12:6—comparing Himself with the temple, how did Jesus present Himself to the Pharisees?

Jesus introduced Himself to the Pharisees as One greater than the temple.

"Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple" (Matthew 12:6).

The temple was the place where sacrifice was offered to God and where God was met, but Jesus is the Owner of the temple and the Christ who is greater than the temple. Therefore their condemning of Jesus' disciples arose from not knowing the authority of Jesus, who is greater than the temple, and the compassion He bestows.

[Question] 6. Matthew 12:7—the Pharisees condemned the guiltless disciples because they did not know what?

The Pharisees' condemning of Jesus' disciples stemmed from the legalistic thinking that puts the form of the Law and their own Sabbath regulations before the mercy of God.

"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless" (Matthew 12:7).

The Pharisees did not consider the circumstance that the disciples plucked and ate the heads of grain because they were hungry; they saw only the outward act of working on the Sabbath and condemned them. They counted the form of the Law important, but they failed to realize the mercy and compassion of God contained within it.

Therefore their condemnation came from a formal legalism that counts the keeping of outward regulations as righteousness and disregards a person's needs and God's compassion.

[Question] 7. Matthew 12:8—He said, "*The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*"; what is the relationship between Jesus and the Sabbath?

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath.

"For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'" (Matthew 12:8).

This means that Jesus is the One who holds the authority to determine the true meaning and right use of the Sabbath. It is not that the Sabbath is higher than Jesus; Jesus is the Lord who rules over the Sabbath.

The Pharisees condemned Jesus' disciples with the rules they themselves had made, but Jesus made it plain that the Sabbath is not a day for oppressing people, but a day for revealing God's mercy, bringing life, and letting people enjoy true rest. Therefore the true meaning of the Sabbath can be rightly understood only through Jesus, its Lord.

[Question] 8. Matthew 12:9–10—in order to accuse Jesus, the people asked what kind of work is lawful to do on the Sabbath.

The question the people asked in order to accuse Jesus was, *"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"*

"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered

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hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—that they might accuse Him" (Matthew 12:9–10).

They did not ask out of pity for the man with the withered hand, asking Jesus to heal him; they asked in order to obtain grounds for accusing Jesus of breaking the Sabbath regulation if He healed on the Sabbath. Therefore this question was not a question to learn the truth, but one that came from the intention of trapping Jesus so as to accuse Him.

[Question] 9. Matthew 12:11–13—how did Jesus answer and act toward those who took issue with healing on the Sabbath?

To the people's crafty question, Jesus answered with the example of rescuing a sheep fallen into a pit on the Sabbath. He said that since a man is of far more value than a sheep, it is right to heal a person and do good on the Sabbath.

Then He commanded the man with the withered hand to stretch out his hand, and when he stretched it out, it was restored whole like the other hand.

"Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other" (Matthew 12:11–13).

Jesus pointed out their hypocritical view of the Sabbath, and showed by word and deed that caring for life and doing good even on the Sabbath is the will of God.

[Question] 10. Matthew 12:14—what plan did the Pharisees devise to harm Jesus?

The Pharisees went out and plotted together, discussing how they might put Jesus to death.

"Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him" (Matthew 12:14).

Even seeing the good work of Jesus healing the man with the withered hand, they neither rejoiced nor believed. Rather, when their wrong view of the Sabbath was exposed, they did not repent but sought to remove Jesus. They claimed to keep the Law, yet they sought to kill Jesus who brought a man to life. This is the contradiction of the Pharisees.

[Question] 11. Matthew 12:16—what did Jesus charge those who had been healed of their diseases?

After healing the sick, Jesus charged them not to make Him known to people.

It is recorded, *"He warned them not to make Him known" (Matthew 12:16).*

Jesus did not try to raise His own fame through miracles or to draw people's attention. Because He intended to accomplish the work of salvation quietly, according to God's will and God's time, He warned them not to spread the things concerning Him.

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[Question] 12. Explain how the ministry of Jesus in Matthew 12:15–16 is connected with the prophecy of Isaiah.

Jesus knew that the Pharisees were plotting to kill Him, and He left that place. When many people followed Him, He healed all their sicknesses, and He warned them not to make Him known to people.

"But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known" (Matthew 12:15–16).

This figure of Jesus is the fulfillment of the character and ministry of the Servant of God whom Isaiah prophesied.

"He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory" (Matthew 12:19–20).

Jesus did not quarrel with those who sought to kill Him, nor did He gather forces to confront them. Neither did He seek to raise His fame by performing miracles; He withdrew quietly. And yet He did not turn away the sick and weak people who followed Him, but healed them all.

Therefore in verses 15–16 appear the gentleness that does not quarrel or make an uproar, the humility that does not display itself, and the compassion that pities and heals the broken. This is exactly how the word concerning the Servant of God prophesied by Isaiah was fulfilled through Jesus.

[Question] 13. Matthew 12:18—in Isaiah's prophecy, what kind of Servant did God say Jesus is?

According to Isaiah's prophecy, God regarded Jesus Christ as the Servant He had chosen and as His Beloved in whom His soul is well pleased. He also gave Him His Spirit.

"Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles" (Matthew 12:18).

Jesus is the Servant God chose for the work of salvation, and the object of God's love and delight. The Spirit of God came upon Jesus and was manifested through His ministry, and Jesus made known God's will and salvation not only to Israel but also to the Gentiles.

[Question] 14. How is the character of Jesus described in Matthew 12:19–20?

In Matthew 12:19–20 the character of Jesus Christ is described as gentle and lowly, as One who has compassion on the weak.

"He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory" (Matthew 12:19–20).

Concretely, the following character appears.

The gentleness that does not quarrel; the humility that does not noisily display itself; the compassion that does not break a weak person who is like a bruised reed; the patience and love that do not give up on a despairing person who is like smoking

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flax; and the justice and faithfulness that finally send forth justice to victory.

Jesus does not press people down by force or cast away the weak; He is the One who pities the bruised and weary soul and restores it.

[Question] 15. What do the words *"In His name Gentiles will trust"* in Matthew 12:21 mean?

The words *"In His name Gentiles will trust"* mean that not only the people of Israel but also the Gentiles will come to believe in Jesus Christ and place their salvation and hope in Him.

"And in His name Gentiles will trust." (Matthew 12:21).

Here, to trust in His name does not mean simply knowing the name of Jesus and waiting; it means believing in Jesus as the Savior, relying on Him, and placing one's hope in Him.

Therefore this verse prophesies that the saving work of Jesus Christ will not be limited to the Jews but will be delivered to all nations and to the Gentiles. Whoever believes in Jesus, regardless of nation or station, obtains the hope of salvation in Him.

[Question] 16. Matthew 12:22–24—when Jesus healed the demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, how did the multitudes and the Pharisees each respond?

When Jesus healed the demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, the multitudes and the Pharisees responded

differently from each other.

"Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.'" (Matthew 12:22–24).

The multitudes were amazed and thought, is this not *"the Son of David,"* the promised Messiah?

The Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out the demons by the help of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

The multitudes saw Jesus' miracle and accepted that He could be the Christ, but the Pharisees, seeing the same miracle, distorted Jesus' power into the power of a demon. The difference between the two responses came from a heart willing to receive Jesus and a heart stubbornly refusing Him.

[Question] 17. Matthew 12:25–29—from whom did the power by which Jesus cast out demons come?

The power by which Jesus cast out demons did not come from Beelzebub; it was power that came from the Spirit of God.

"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matthew 12:28).

Jesus said that if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself, and so Satan's kingdom cannot stand. Therefore Jesus' casting out of demons was not done by the help of the ruler of the demons but by the Spirit of God.

Jesus also spoke the parable of first binding the strong man and then plundering the goods of his house.

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"Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house" (Matthew 12:29).

Here the strong man refers to Satan, and the One who binds him is Jesus. Jesus' casting out demons by the power of the Spirit is the evidence that He has overcome the power of Satan and that the kingdom of God has already come.

[Question] 18. Matthew 12:30—how did Jesus distinguish those who are with Him from those who are not?

Jesus explained the relationship between Himself and man as that of the one who is with Him and the one who opposes Him, the one who gathers and the one who scatters.

"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30).

This means that there can be no neutral position before Jesus.

• The person who believes in Jesus and is with Him is a person who stands on Jesus' side.

• The person who is not with Jesus is a person who opposes Jesus.

• The person who gathers souls together with Jesus is a person who serves the kingdom of God.

• The person who does not gather with Jesus is a person who rather scatters souls.

Therefore a person comes to stand in one of two relationships: either he clearly believes in and follows Jesus, or he refuses and opposes Him.

[Question] 19. Matthew 12:31–32 says that the sin of the person who blasphemes the Spirit does not receive remission; what punishment does such a person receive?

The person who blasphemes the Spirit or speaks against Him does not receive the remission of sin, and he does not receive remission either in this age or in the age to come.

"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:31–32).

In the context of this word, the sin of blaspheming the Spirit refers to the deed of the Pharisees who saw the clear work of Jesus casting out demons by the Spirit of God, and yet deliberately distorted it into the power of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

That is, it is knowing the truth the Spirit reveals and yet stubbornly rejecting it, attributing it to evil, and refusing to repent to the very end. Because such a person rejects the very testimony of the Spirit that leads him to the remission of sin, he does not receive remission in this age or in the age to come, and comes to receive the judgment of God.

[Question] 20. Matthew 12:33–35—to what did Jesus liken the Pharisees, whose inside and outside were different?

Jesus pointed out the duplicity of the Pharisees with the

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parable of the tree and its fruit, and the parable of the good and the evil stored up in the heart.

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things" (Matthew 12:33–35).

As good fruit is borne on a good tree and bad fruit on a bad tree, a person's words and conduct reveal the state of his heart.

The Pharisees, even while seeing the good results of Jesus casting out demons and healing the sick, accused Him, saying that the power came from Beelzebub. Jesus pointed out that one cannot acknowledge the good fruit and yet call the tree evil. Their evil words revealed their duplicity: godly in outward appearance, but with hearts full of evil.

[Question] 21. Matthew 12:36–37—what does the word teach, that for every idle word a person speaks he will be examined on the day of judgment, and that by his words he will be justified or condemned?

A person will be examined on the day of judgment for every idle word he has spoken, and by his own words he will be justified or condemned.

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36–37).

Since words are what fills a person's heart appearing outwardly, they reveal that person's faith and inner being. From a good heart come good words, and from an evil heart come evil words.

Therefore it does not mean that words themselves become merit for obtaining salvation; it means that words become the evidence showing what a person's heart and faith are like, and so become the measure of judgment. In particular, the words of the Pharisees who denounced the work of the Spirit through Jesus as something evil revealed their stubborn and evil hearts.

[Question] 22. Matthew 12:38—what sign did the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus to show them?

Some of the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus to show them a sign.

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.'" (Matthew 12:38).

They had already seen many mighty works of Jesus healing the sick and casting out demons, but they did not believe. Therefore this request was not a sincere seeking of evidence in order to believe; it was testing Jesus and demanding a sign of the kind they themselves wanted.

[Question] 23. Matthew 12:39–41—what did Jesus answer those who demanded a sign?

Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees as an evil and adulterous generation, and answered that no sign would be shown them except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

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"But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:39–41).

The event of Jonah being in the belly of the great fish for three days and coming out was the sign showing that Jesus would die, remain in the tomb, and come alive again. Therefore the decisive sign Jesus would show was His own death and burial and resurrection.

Moreover, the men of Nineveh repented on hearing the preaching of Jonah, but the scribes and Pharisees did not repent though they saw the word and power of Jesus, who is greater than Jonah. Therefore He said that at the judgment the men of Nineveh would condemn that generation.

[Question] 24. Matthew 12:41–42—who are the people who will be condemned at the judgment?

The people who will be condemned at the judgment are the people of this generation who directly saw the word Jesus preached and the power He worked—He who is greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon—and yet did not repent and did not believe. Those who appear in the passage as witnesses condemning them are the men of Nineveh and the queen of the South.

"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this

generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:41–42).

The men of Nineveh heard the word of judgment Jonah preached, turned from their evil ways, and repented. Therefore they become witnesses who expose the stubbornness of the scribes and Pharisees and the people of that day, who did not repent though Jesus, greater than Jonah, spoke to them Himself.

The queen of the South came from the ends of the earth to hear the wise words of Solomon. But the people of that day would not receive the word, though Jesus—greater than Solomon and the very wisdom of God—was near them. Therefore the zeal and faith of the queen of the South become evidence condemning the unbelief of those who heard Jesus' word and did not believe.

This word also rebukes the wrong faith that would rely on visible miracles and signs more than on the word of God. The scribes and Pharisees demanded yet another sign although Jesus had already preached many words and worked many powers. Because they had no heart to believe the word, they would not have received Jesus as the Christ however many more miracles they saw.

The most important sign Jesus would show was the sign of Jonah. As Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights and came out, Jesus said that He would die and be buried and rise on the third day. Jesus took all the sins of the world onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, carried those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood, and by rising on the third day He

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overcame sin and death and became our Savior.

True faith is not continually demanding visible miracles or fleshly blessings, but receiving just as it is the salvation God has testified to in the recorded word. If God says that He has removed all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must not demand another sign but believe that word with the heart.

Therefore this word does not apply only to those who heard Jesus' word at that time and did not believe. Today as well, those who can hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished and yet do not believe it, demanding only miracles and outward evidence, will be condemned at the judgment. The men of Nineveh and the queen of the South responded to the word given to them, but those who have received the clearer and more complete word of salvation and yet do not believe will bear a much greater responsibility.

[Question] 25. Matthew 12:43–45—what spiritual lesson does the word give, that more wicked spirits enter the house that is empty, swept, and put in order, so that the last state becomes worse than the first?

The spiritual lesson of the parable of the unclean spirit is that it is not enough for a person to cast off evil outwardly and make his life clean; his heart must be filled with God.

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than

himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:43–45).

The important part is that the house was swept and put in order and yet stood empty. Even if one corrects outward wrongs and looks religiously clean, if God and His word are not in the heart, one can come under the rule of evil again, and the last state can become worse than the first.

This parable applies to the generation of that day as well. They experienced Jesus' word and power, but they did not receive Jesus as the Christ. It is the warning that because they rejected Jesus, leaving empty the place of the heart where they ought to have repented and believed in Him, they would come to an even more stubborn and evil state.

Therefore true change does not lie in mere outward improvement or moral resolution, but in believing in Jesus and filling the heart with the word of God.

[Question] 26. Matthew 12:46–47—what were His mother and brothers, mentioned as Jesus' fleshly family, trying to say?

The passage does not record the concrete content of what Jesus' mother and brothers were trying to say. It records only the fact that while Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, His mother and brothers stood outside seeking to talk with Him, and that one person told Jesus, *"Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."*

Here the mother refers to Mary, who conceived Jesus by the Holy Spirit and bore Him, and the brothers refer to Jesus' fleshly brothers born of Mary and Joseph. But the center of the

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passage is not in revealing what they were trying to say to Jesus; it is in the fact that, taking this occasion, Jesus taught who His true spiritual family is.

Jesus did not deny the fleshly family relationship itself or disregard His mother and brothers. Jesus taught the fact that the spiritual relationship of believing and following the will of God is more important than the blood relationship of the flesh. So He pointed to His disciples and said that the person who does the will of His Father in heaven is His brother and sister and mother.

The first step of doing the will of God the Father is to believe with the heart the salvation God accomplished through the Son. Jesus took all the sins of the world onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, carried those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood, and became our Savior by rising from the dead. The person who believes 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.

Therefore the spiritual family Jesus spoke of is not simply people who attend church or perform religious acts. They are the people who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sins, serve the same God as Father, and deliver the gospel following the Father's will. Though nationality and lineage and station differ, those who believe the same gospel and have received the same Spirit become brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

Neither does this word mean that one need not love or care for one's fleshly family. The saved person must love and serve his fleshly family as well and deliver the gospel to them. Only, when the wishes of the fleshly family and the word of God collide, one must follow God's will before the blood

relationship.

Therefore verses 46–47 are not a word meant to convey the concrete content of what His mother and brothers were trying to say. This event was recorded to teach that the relationship of faith—believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and following the will of God the Father—is deeper and more eternal than fleshly blood ties, and that such people are the true spiritual family of Jesus.

[Question] 27. Matthew 12:48–50—who are the spiritual family who become Jesus' brother and sister and mother?

The true family of Jesus Christ, that is, His spiritual family, are the people who do the will of God the Father in heaven.

"But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'" (Matthew 12:48–50).

Jesus did not deny His fleshly family; He taught that there is a spiritual relationship more fundamental than blood ties. Regardless of nation or station, the person who believes the word of God and obeys His will is the spiritual family acknowledged as Jesus' brother and sister and mother. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Let us preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who believe the Nicene Creed

< Matthew 12:1-21 >

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!' But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.' Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a

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sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all. Yet He warned them not to make Him known, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust.'"

In Matthew chapter 12, Jesus heals people's diseases. Let us first look together at the word from verse 1 to verse 8.

The disciples who plucked heads of grain and ate on the Sabbath

It is recorded in verses 1 and 2 like this: *"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'"* In this way the Pharisees slandered Jesus' disciples.

The Jews set apart and kept the Sabbath from about sunset on Friday until sunset the next day. Now Jesus' disciples,

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passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, plucked heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, blew away the husks, and ate the kernels. It was something anyone who was hungry could do. But in the eyes of the legalists this looked the same as working on the Sabbath, and so they picked a quarrel, saying that they had broken the Sabbath.

Then Jesus spoke like this: "Look at David. When David fled from King Saul and was hungry, did he not take the showbread that was in the house of God and eat it himself and also give it to those who were with him? Have you not read in the law that the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless?" So He asked them in return.

And in verse 6 He said this: *"I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple."* The One greater than the temple is Jesus Himself. I am the very One greater than the temple. While I am with you, why do you take a thing that can happen to anyone, rebuke it by the law like that, treat people as heretics, and despise them? This is what He was saying.

Anyone can do such a thing. Because man is born a seed of sin from birth, man lives doing things even worse than this. But the Pharisees were people who thought they served God by keeping the Law. In their eyes this was sin. But in Jesus' eyes it was not so.

The two ways of believing in Jesus

Everyone, there are two ways for us to believe in Jesus. One is to believe in Jesus with the Nicene Creed as the standard. The Nicene Creed confesses the triune God, that is, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally God. Long ago, among those who believed in Jesus, there were people who disputed

whether Jesus is God or a created being. Some even regarded Jesus as a created being. But Jesus is in essence the Creator. He is the Creator who made the whole universe by the word, and He is God. And so several hundred theologians gathered and deliberated, and adopted the confession that Jesus Christ is in essence God, equal with God the Father, the Creator and the Savior.

To revere Jesus as God like this, to respect Him, love Him, and fear Him, is a right thing. But if a person only reveres Him without knowing the fact that Jesus has saved him with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, then, on seeing an act like the disciples' plucking and eating the heads of grain, he comes rather to despise people.

The other way is to believe in Jesus through the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus has given. It is believing that Jesus is God and the Savior, and believing this: that Jesus came as our Savior, received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty and took on the sin of mankind once and for all, and carried those sins and was nailed to the Cross, shed His blood and died, rose again on the third day, became our Savior, and set us free from sin. We are the very people who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

But on this earth there are many people who do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if they believe that Jesus is God and the Son of God and believe in Jesus who hung on the Cross, if they do not know the fact that Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, they remain legalists. Because they do not know how Jesus concretely took on our sins and washed our sins away, they believe only religiously. They believe only that Jesus who hung on the Cross saved us; something is missing.

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Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus spoke like this: the Lord of the Sabbath is I Myself. Have I not given you rest? Was I not born into this earth for you, and did I not receive baptism from John the Baptist at thirty and take on all your sins? In a little while I will hang on the Cross, shed My blood and die, and rise again to become your eternal Savior—why then is the date of the Sabbath so important? What matters is the faith that knows and believes what God's intent was in commanding the Sabbath to be kept; keeping the date is not what matters.

Think about it. Between country and country there is a time difference, so that when it is day on one side it is night on the other. If one must keep the Sabbath to be saved, then in some countries a person could never fully keep that day his whole life. If you keep the Sabbath here and then board an airplane and go to another place, it is not the Sabbath there. So being saved by keeping a date is something that cannot be.

What is it that the Lord did for us when He came to save us? He was born as a man through the body of Mary, received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty and took over the sins of mankind, and was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. Then, if we believe in that Jesus, do we have sin? We have no sin. We have received the remission of sins. Who is the One who gave us the remission of sins? It is Jesus Himself.

Then, between these people who picked a quarrel over Jesus' disciples plucking and eating heads of grain on the Sabbath, asking why they do not keep the Sabbath, and us who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus gave—whose faith is the right one? There are two kinds of people on this earth. One is the legalists, and the other is those who believe the gospel

of the water and the Spirit. We are the latter.

The core that must not be missing from the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Everyone, suppose someone wrote a letter to the one he loves. She read the letter over and over, but something was missing. He had written beautifully that the brook babbles along, that beautiful flowers are in bloom, and that the autumn sky is clear and serene, but there was no word that he loves her. The most important core of a love letter is the words 'I love you.' If those words are missing, it is not the letter of one who loves.

Jesus also wrote us a love letter. "I was born into this earth to remove your sins; I received baptism from John the Baptist and took on your sin; for you I was nailed to the Cross and died and rose again, and I removed all your sins. I became your Savior. You are My people, and you have become those who have nothing to do with sin. I loved you, and for you I received baptism from John, and for you I was nailed to the Cross. In this way I have saved you." This is the love letter Jesus has given us.

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist is the very core of this letter. Yet ordinary Christians believe leaving out this core. Like a letter missing the words 'I love you,' the baptism by which Jesus took on our sins is missing.

To believe in Jesus personally, we must rightly know the gospel of the water and the Spirit

They believe in the reverse order. They believe that Jesus was born and went to the Cross and saved them, and then,

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whenever they sin, they beg Him to remit that sin. They believe that when they offer prayers of repentance, then the Lord washes their sins away. The order has been reversed. Everyone, when the order is reversed, it often produces absurd results.

We have fellowship with the Lord because we know the Lord's love. The Lord was born into this earth, took on our sin through John the Baptist, and carried those sins and went to the Cross and shed His blood. So when the thought comes to us—the Lord loved us, and to remove our sins He took them on with the baptism He received from John—thanksgiving wells up from the heart and a grateful heart springs up. The Lord's love is not forgotten. Jesus who took on my sins, Jesus who received baptism from John the Baptist in order to do so, is truly precious to us.

Knowing rightly, feeling rightly, and acting rightly like this—this is believing in Jesus personally. Only when we know rightly do we believe rightly. Jesus came as our Savior, received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins, and was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died. So He loved us. Only when we know the truth does that truth make us free. Jesus loved us, and so, if we also know Jesus rightly, we become those who can love Jesus rightly.

But most people are not so. Why? Because they hold only to the Nicene Creed and believe in Jesus, yes, but believe only religiously.

How did the Nicene Creed come about?

In the year 325, an emperor of Rome called together the theologians and philosophers under him and had them make the Nicene Creed. Then he proclaimed it in his own name, and those

who would not believe according to it were all called heretics and were seized and killed. He subjected Christianity to his own politics and exploited it.

Whether people acknowledge it or not, Jesus is God and the Creator. Even if people do not acknowledge it, Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and took on our sins once and for all, and hung on the Cross and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. That is not a matter for man to acknowledge or not.

In this world there are many people who use religion for politics. The kings of many nations in the old ages also made Buddhism or Confucianism the religion of the nation, bound the people into one, and used it for their own politics. Rome was the same. At that time Rome was a great power of the world, but its ethics and morals had collapsed, and it was in a precarious state, invaded by other nations. Since the people were not united into one, the emperor used Christianity, made the Nicene Creed, and subjected Christianity under himself. Through some three hundred theologians he had everything concerning the Scriptures written out, and made people blindly submit to the Nicene Creed. Those who made the Nicene Creed became the leaders of Christianity, and whoever did not obey their words was called a heretic and consigned to hell. That is how it has come down to this day.

After that the Reformation arose. But those who brought about the Reformation also received the Nicene Creed and believed it as it was. Of the doctrines brought over from the Roman Church, they discarded what was unnecessary and took what was usable and made it their own theological doctrine. And so they established theological seminaries and laid it down that no one may stand before those who believe in Jesus and preach unless he passes through a seminary and becomes a pastor.

These people laid their foundation on the Nicene Creed.

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What the Nicene Creed says is only this: that Jesus came to this earth as the Savior and shed His blood on the Cross and saved us. But Jesus came to this earth as the Savior, received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty and took on our sins, and carried those sins and was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. This is the salvation of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished.

Only when we believe this work Jesus did does the sin in our hearts disappear, do we come to know that Jesus is our Savior, and does thanksgiving arise in the heart and love arise. And we come to know that the Lord has made us His own people.

Jesus, who healed the man with the withered hand and desired mercy

Because this is not in place, people believe in Jesus and yet are always sinners, always offering prayers of repentance, always trying only to keep the Law. Look at verse 10: *"There was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'—that they might accuse Him."* A man whose hand was completely withered, with no blood flowing through it, came before Jesus asking to be healed. The people were watching to see what Jesus would do. Last time He let His disciples pluck heads of grain and eat on the Sabbath, and this time He would heal a sick man on the Sabbath—why not wait one day and heal him another day, they said, picking a quarrel. That is how the legalists talk.

Then Jesus said, *"What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?" (Matthew 12:11)* Though it is the Sabbath for Me as well, this man's hand is withered and he asks Me to

heal him; I have the power to heal him, so what is wrong with healing him? You know only the law of sacrifice within God's Law and only offer sacrifices, but that is not what I desire.

Let us read verse 7 together: *"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless."* In the Old Testament law of sacrifice, when there was someone who had broken the Law, he came to the Tabernacle with that sin, laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed the sin onto it, and the blood of that animal was taken and put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and the remaining blood was poured out on the ground, and the flesh was placed on the altar of burnt offering and burned as a sacrifice offered before God, and so he received the remission of sin.

But Jesus came as our Savior to fulfill all of that. I have already received baptism from John and taken on your sins. In a little while I will hang on the Cross, pay the price of sin, and become your eternal Savior. In that sense I desire mercy. What is mercy? It is the heart of the Savior who came to save those who can by no means keep the Law, who cannot escape the punishment of the Law, and who can only go to hell. I want to remove your sins, and I want you to be saved by the faith that believes that your sins have been removed. I do not want you to receive the remission of sin through the sacrificial offerings you bring. Now is the age of the New Testament. I have come to fulfill the words of the prophecy of the Old Testament. This is what He was saying.

And in verse 8 He said this: *"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."* Here the Son of Man is a word that refers to Jesus Himself.

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Jesus, who has become our Master

Everyone, who is the Lord of the Sabbath? Jesus came to this earth to save you and me, received baptism from John at the age of thirty and took on the sins, and hung on the Cross and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. Who is the Master of you and me? It is Jesus who has saved you and me. The One who removed your sins and mine is Jesus; the One who gave us new life is Jesus; the One who made us God's people is Jesus; and the One who will take us to the kingdom of heaven to live there is also Jesus. Jesus is our very Master.

As a beast has its owner, we too have our Master. A beast without an owner may be beaten to death by anyone, but no one can treat carelessly a beast that has an owner. Jesus has become our Master. Originally, Jesus created the whole universe and all things by the word, and when man was made, Jesus was there. God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the three, gathered and said, let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and They made us.

Jesus is our Master from the beginning. When we were deceived by the devil and fell into sin, Jesus came to us as the Savior. He came to this earth, received baptism from John, hung on the Cross and died, paid the price of sin in full, and saved us. Then, if He is not our Master, who is our Master?

Even if a person believes that Jesus is our Savior and the Son of God and that He hung on the Cross, if he does not believe the fact that Jesus came as the Savior and received baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty and took on our sins, he cannot answer the question of when Jesus took on our sins at the Cross. On the Cross He received the punishment for the sins He had already taken on. Jesus took on our sins with the baptism He received from John, and on the Cross He paid the price of those

sins and gave up His own life to give us new life. And He died and rose again to give us eternal life. Therefore He tells us to believe this.

But people believe only the Nicene Creed, and so they believe in Jesus, yes, but believe religiously. They do not believe what Jesus said; they believe the faith the Roman emperor laid down. In it the baptism by which Jesus took on our sins is missing.

The Elijah who was to come is John the Baptist

Jesus spoke about John the Baptist like this: *"For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' 'Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:10–14).*

Everyone, Jesus praised John the Baptist in the highest terms. He said that among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist. The prophecy of the Old Testament Scriptures is until John. For John the Baptist became the last High Priest and did that work of giving baptism on Jesus' head, and so finished his ministry.

John the Baptist is that Elijah whom God prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. He gave baptism to Jesus and passed the sins of mankind onto the body of Jesus. John the Baptist carried out that ministry. Therefore the person who believes the

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ministry by which Jesus took on the sins of mankind through John the Baptist takes the kingdom of heaven by force with that faith. With that faith he flings open the gate of heaven and enters in.

By knowing and believing what Jesus and John the Baptist did—the fact that Jesus took on all the sins of mankind by receiving baptism from John the Baptist at the age of thirty—and by knowing and believing that our sins passed over to Jesus, we receive the washing of sin in our hearts. And after that, Jesus went to the Cross and received the judgment for those sins.

Only those born again of water and the Spirit enter the kingdom of heaven

Unless one is born again of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus came to this earth clothed in flesh, received baptism from John, hung on the Cross and died, and rose again, and saved us—and all of this is the work the Holy Spirit did, the work God did.

Jesus came as the Savior, conceived by the Holy Spirit in the body of Mary and clothed in a human body. As the High Priest of the kingdom of heaven, being God and yet becoming man in the incarnation, He took on our sins with the baptism He received from John, and hung on the Cross and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. In this way He has saved us.

Everyone, people today have been ruined because of the Nicene Creed. For how long have they been ruined? For one thousand seven hundred years. In the old days, when we believed in Jesus, we were taught only that Jesus was born, went to Pilate and suffered, went to the Cross and shed His blood and died for us, and rose again and became our Savior. And they said

that He took on our sins at the Cross. But Jesus did not take on our sins at the Cross; He took on our sins by receiving baptism through John the Baptist.

Jesus, by receiving baptism from John, took on all sin and fulfilled all righteousness. And He carried those sins and went to the Cross, was nailed to it and died, and rose again, and became our Savior. He became the One who saved us by water and the Spirit.

Jesus, who does not break a bruised reed

In verses 20 and 21 it is recorded of Jesus like this: *"A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory; And in His name Gentiles will trust."*

Jesus does not break a bruised reed. Whether a person failed to keep the Law deliberately or failed to keep it because his strength was weak, Jesus does not break the one whose heart is bruised, saying, I am a sinner; I am dying because of sin; I am going to hell because of sin. He is generous toward him.

Yes, you have committed such a sin and your heart aches. But in fact you have not committed only that sin. You sinned at that time too, and you have committed this sin and that sin as well. Because you were born a descendant of Adam, you were born carrying sin from birth, and you could not help committing such sins. To save you from all those sins, I came to this earth clothed in a human body, received baptism from John the Baptist, and took on your sins. I was then nailed to the Cross to bear the judgment for you, shedding the blood of life to give you new life, and rising again to give you eternal life. I have become your Savior. The Lord came to us to become such a Lord to us.

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What kind of One is Jesus? He is our eternal Savior. Everyone, those who believe only the Nicene Creed say that one must keep propriety and morals. They say one must eat with decorum and must not eat in a rush. That is a right thing, but when a person is hungry there are times he cannot keep it. The sins committed knowingly, the sins committed unknowingly, and the sins committed out of weakness are truly many. All such people are like a bruised reed. When a reed is bruised it turns red, sickens, and breaks. But Jesus does not break the bruised reed, and He does not quench the lamp that is going out. It was for just such people that Jesus came as the Savior. He came to save them by water and the Spirit.

Let us preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit in this last age

I think about why people have been deceived for 1,700 years, and why God met a man like me. If someone had delivered this truth to me and I had come to believe it, I would have lived learning under that person. But no one delivered the gospel of the water and the Spirit to me. I agonized and agonized over why Jesus received baptism. I asked people, and no one knew; I searched through books, and no one knew.

So I prayed and fasted, asking, "Grant me realization of what this word means." Then one day, as I was reading the word, a bright light came into my heart. It was the word that Jesus received baptism from John and thus fulfilled all righteousness. The realization came: John the Baptist is that Elijah who was to come; this man is the last prophet, the one who passes on the sin of mankind; Jesus took on all the sin of mankind by receiving baptism from the last High Priest; and then He went to the Cross

and died and rose again and became our Savior.

It is written so in the word of the Old Testament and written so in the word of the New Testament—why then did people not preach this? For a while I sat dazed before the word. All the truth of the Scriptures is contained in Matthew 3:13–17—why did they not speak of this? Not only my sins but also the sins of every kind of sinner in this world, and the sins of religious people, passed over to Jesus through the baptism He received from John. The sins each one committed out of weakness also passed over. It is not that He took away some people's sins and did not take away others'; He took them all away. He received the judgment for them all. And He died and rose again and became our eternal Savior.

Right now Jesus lives at the right hand of the throne of God. The Lord is the One who will come again to this earth as the returning Lord. Everyone, we must know that Jesus became our Savior by water and the Spirit, and we must deliver this gospel. Now is the last age.

This world's natural climate is now breaking down. They say natural disasters will grow still worse. But there is something more dangerous than this: the heart of man failing to receive the remission of sin. The heart that has not received the remission of sin harbors evil and schemes how to harm and torment others to gain its own profit. The news never runs out of such things. People's hearts sicken, asking, why do I live so poorly while others live so well? But when we receive the remission of sin, we can love one another and share and live in peace.

Everyone, in this last age we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We can no longer stop. I spoke of this even thirty years ago—that because of the Nicene Creed people believe in Jesus and yet go to hell. But it seemed too early, so I paused for a while. I meant first to deliver the gospel to the whole

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world, and then to make this fact into a book and bring it to light. "Return from the Nicene Creed to the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit!"—in this book, together with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, I intend to make plain one by one what the Nicene Creed is and what influence it has had, following the questions of when, where, what, why, how, and who.

I intend to put into the book what happens when one believes the Nicene Creed and what the gospel of the water and the Spirit is, and to deliver it politely to those who believe in Jesus and those who believe in Catholicism. Not a single word of abuse is contained in it. Read it, judge, and confirm: if you believe that what this book says is the truth, you receive the remission of sins; if you do not believe, you become a person who opposes God.

Everyone, as through one man's offense many became sinners, as we became sinners because of Adam and Eve, so that one man who made the Nicene Creed brought in many theologians, made an absurd doctrine, and spread it, and thereby more than two billion people in the whole world who believe in Jesus have failed to be born again and failed to receive the remission of sins. How could we know this and not deliver it? We cannot but deliver it.

We must deliver it whatever persecution comes. I have tried delivering it with my mouth as well. But there is a limit to doing it only with the mouth. So I intend to deliver it in a gentlemanly way, in literature. I will make it in Korean and give it to you, so you also read it. Why this is the truth even as we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and why so many ordinary people who believe in Jesus have failed to be born again—it is all in this book. I cannot help doing this work. He keeps telling me in my heart to do it—how could I not do it? Let us join our strength together, pray, and go forward in this way. I will close the message. ✉

Let us preach the gospel of
the water and the Spirit to those who believe the Nicene Creed

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Let us become wheat and greet the Lord

< Matthew 12:22-33 >

"Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. 'Either

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make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit."

It is good to see you. You have all labored much. Today also the Lord has kept us. He has kept us until now, and I believe He will keep us from now on as well. Whatever the matter, we entrust it to the Lord and live. Today I chose this passage to meet you like this, to share what is profitable, and to share together the word the Lord wants to speak to us. On the basis of the word of this passage, I will share what the Lord says to us.

The Lord who healed the demon-possessed man, and the Pharisees' blasphemy

Looking at the word of the passage, people brought to Jesus a man who was demon-possessed, blind, and mute. When the Lord healed him, the mute spoke and saw. The multitudes were all amazed. But some people slandered the Lord and spoke what was not good. They said that He cast out the demons by the help of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.

Then the Lord knew their thoughts and spoke. Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to ruin; if I cast out demons by the help of Beelzebub the ruler of the demons, how then will Satan's kingdom stand? If I cast out a demon by the help of a demon, this is like My own kingdom, so would I not be destroying Myself? So He asked. The people heard that word and could not answer at all.

Speaking this word, the Lord says to the disciples of that day and the people around Him, and also to you and me today, as follows. Let us read verses 31 and 32 of the passage together.

"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

The Lord speaks this word to His disciples, to the people who were around Him at that time, and to you and me today. Every sin and blasphemy of man receives remission. But blaspheming the Spirit does not receive remission. Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man receives remission. But whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit does not receive remission, either in this age or in the age to come.

What is the sin of blaspheming the Spirit

What on earth does this word mean? Speaking a word against the Son of Man is something like this. God came to this earth clothed in a human body to save us, and we may oppose Him and say we will not believe in Him. But even a person who opposed Him like that can receive the remission of sin if he believes later. Among us too, how many are there who held out a long time and then came to believe in Jesus? Yet the Lord says that every sin and blasphemy of man receives remission, but only the sin of blaspheming the Spirit does not receive remission. What on earth does this mean?

Then what would blaspheming the Spirit be? It is blaspheming the work God came to this earth and did, that is, the work the Holy Spirit does. Then how does this word apply to us concretely? We must think this over deeply.

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The faith that receives the remission of sin, and the gospel of the water and the Spirit

We believe the righteousness of Jesus Christ and are saved by faith. But to believe in Jesus, one must first admit and recognize what state one is in and what kind of sinner one is. Who am I before God? Am I one who is right, or one who is not right? Am I a sinner, or am I not? What kind of sinner am I? One must first see one's own self like this.

When a person realizes his sin like that and looks to God's help and compassion, God receives such a person. The one who relies on God and comes before the Lord with the faith that believes His love and mercy, God does not turn away but saves. God has saved the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead. That is how you and I have been saved.

The leading of the Spirit that must be received after being saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit

But the problem is from the time after we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive salvation. Once we receive the remission of sin by faith, from then on we carry on the life of faith. Then what is it to receive the leading of the Spirit? Jesus came to this earth, finished the whole work of saving you and me from sin through the baptism He received from John and the work of the Cross, and went up into heaven. And He sent us the Holy Spirit. He poured out the Holy Spirit into the hearts of

those who believe in Jesus Christ.

Then when is it that we blaspheme the Spirit? The Lord speaks like this.

"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matthew 12:30).

In the end, the person who does not unite with the Lord's will is one who scatters and blasphemes the Lord. This is what the Lord is saying.

Therefore, after we have received salvation, we must receive the leading of the Spirit. But the problem is how to receive that leading. People do well up to receiving the remission of sin. But after receiving the remission of sin, many do not know how to receive the leading of the Spirit, and carry on the life of faith in their own way. In the end, that is a life of faith lived on the strength of one's own self-importance. When one has received the remission of sin, a truly strange heart arises: you have been saved and I have been saved, you are God's worker and I am God's worker, so what is different—why must I listen to your words? Thinking by the flesh, such a heart arises often.

And so there are many who, after receiving salvation, fail to carry on the life of faith rightly, and finally oppose God and forsake God and leave. This is precisely the sin of blaspheming the Spirit.

The leading of the Spirit comes through the people of God

Then how do we go against the Spirit? Of course the Holy Spirit is in our hearts too. But the person whose faith is young does not sense that Spirit well. God speaks and leads through His servants, that is, through the church. Yet not knowing that

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this leading is the leading of the Spirit and going against it—that is blaspheming the Spirit.

People say, you have been saved and I have been saved, so do you alone have the Spirit? I have the Spirit too. Then let me ask: do you know God's will well? Do you know what work God tells us to do on this earth? And do you follow that will? You may know it. But between the person who follows that will and the person who does not, there is a difference of heaven and earth.

There are people who, even after being saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, go against the will of God. Jesus desires to gather people in and save them, but we sometimes rather dislike gathering and stand in the place of scattering God's people. Knowing God's will is something everyone can do alike. But the question is whether there is a person who does that will. The person who does that will is the very person who receives the leading of the Spirit.

The person who receives the leading of the Spirit, however impossible the work looks in men's eyes, holds God's will in his heart, obeys, and puts it into action. Though it looks as reckless as striking a rock with an egg, he obeys like that. And God fulfills His will through such people.

I am neither better nor worse than you as a human being. We are all the same. But in the matter of knowing God's will and doing that will, God causes me to speak that will. How shall we deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit on this earth now, what must we prepare and how must we lead the church, the world now stands thus and the word of God says thus, so what direction and goal must we take and go forward—these things God speaks to us.

I am not saying things I privately want to say. At the least, He causes me to speak what God's will is. What does God want now, what is the situation now and what does the word of the

Scriptures say, and therefore what direction and goal must we take and go forward—He causes me to speak such words.

But what would happen if one disregarded and went against the will and word of God that comes out through the mouth of the one who goes before? Jesus desires to preach the gospel to the whole world, to gather people in and save them, to nurture them and make them His workers, and to expand His kingdom. But if we refuse the words of that one who goes before, it is the same as refusing for ourselves the leading of the Spirit.

The calling to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit

It is from the time I first met the Lord through the word. After I realized the word that Jesus received baptism from John and took on all the sin of the world, and met the Lord, I sat dazed for thirty minutes. It was truly bewildering. It was as desolate as walking alone into a deep mountain valley. Meeting the Lord was good, but the way ahead felt so hard. When I looked over the history of mankind, apart from the early church there was no one preaching this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Then what would God's will be? It was to preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit. As soon as I met the Lord, it was to preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Does that make sense? I had only just met the Lord—what and how would I preach? If I said I had met the Lord through the word, would people believe me? If I preached the gospel of the water and the Spirit—people say they have received the remission of sin by believing only in the blood of the Cross—would they believe my word that Jesus took on all the sin of the world when He received baptism from John? Far from believing, they would rather

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oppose and revile me. Humanly it was an utterly impossible thing.

But in any case, it was certain that my sins had disappeared, that the Lord had saved me, and that He had saved not only me but all mankind from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The Lord said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28)*, and He gave us rest and saved us. And even now He is speaking to me through the word and the Spirit. So for a while it was hard. But at last I knelt down and confessed and prayed.

"Lord, yes. I will preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if not a single person believes, I will preach this gospel." So I confessed. I know well and believe that Jesus, when He received baptism from John, took on the sins of all mankind, and received the judgment on the Cross and delivered us from the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead and gave us new life. I could not be sure what effect it would have, but since it was His will, I said I would obey. Obeying like that, I have come at last to meet you today and preach the gospel like this.

The way to preach the gospel in this age

Then how shall we preach the gospel to the whole world? First, we must establish churches. And after that, how shall we preach it? It is not done by talking and preaching all day long. To unravel one by one how absurd the doctrines people have learned are, and to deliver what the true gospel is, is truly hard work.

So we had to find a method fit for this age. I thought we could deliver the gospel through paper books and electronic books. So I consulted with the workers, made a website, and began to

deliver this gospel to the world. That is how we have served the gospel of the water and the Spirit until now.

Working honestly and serving the gospel with those earnings is also the leading of the Spirit. We do not serve the gospel with money gained by deceiving others. We benefit others and give them help and receive love, and with what we gain that way we deliver the gospel and also live ourselves. Because our hearts are upright before God and before men, we are unashamed. We also report our finances transparently. This year has been truly difficult, but even so, receiving the leading of the Spirit, we have delivered the gospel to the whole world.

Everyone, we must know the current of this age. Even in preaching the gospel, it is not done merely by working hard. Now is the age of division. It is an age in which nation after nation builds walls for its own interest and opposes one another. It is exactly as the Scriptures said, that nation will rise against nation and people against people. These things come because of self-interest, and they will grow still worse.

Now is the time to sow the seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Then in this situation how must we deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit? Now is the time to sow seed. It is the time for the farmer to sow seed, not the time to reap. So we are sowing seed without ceasing even now. This year was truly hard. Finances were difficult, and for a while we could not even send the books. But we sent the books again and delivered the gospel. If we do not deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit now, a time will come when we cannot deliver it.

When the world becomes harder than now, a time will come

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when it is fixed by law that one cannot speak one's faith to others. The whole world will come to have such a system. Then we will be unable to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit. At that time the world will grow dark and become a world of destruction, and people will see with their own eyes people going to hell. Then it will become an age in which one cannot help preaching even without being told to preach. Since it is a world that is ending anyway, the believer believes all the more, and the unbeliever opposes all the more.

It is recorded so in the Book of Revelation. He who is holy becomes still more holy, and he who is evil becomes still more evil. God makes things known through the word, and the Holy Spirit causes people to speak of that work, act on it, and lead it. It is still the time of sowing seed. In this last age, when the Antichrist appears and the time of tribulation comes, then the harvest is gathered in earnest. The enormous harvest of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold all takes place then.

Refusing the leading of the one who goes before is blaspheming the Spirit

The one who blasphemes the Spirit does not receive the remission of sin. When those who lead you—those in the position of leading the church—lead you, refusing that leading is going against the Holy Spirit who is in that person's heart. That is joined to exactly the same thing as the sin of blaspheming the Spirit. People follow well when the times are at ease. But when they themselves come into a hard situation, the one who does not know God's will errs and falls into the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, and comes to stand in the place of opposing the church and doing evil.

I am telling you this word beforehand so that you will not become so. Such things will arise more and more from now on. What has happened until now is nothing. What is it for us to receive the leading of the Spirit? The words of God's servant who leads you rightly without private motives—those are the words of the Spirit spoken to you and the leading of the Spirit. If you refuse that, your life of faith is finished. Otherwise, how would you know God's will, and how would you know whether you are carrying on your life of faith well or not?

When I speak spiritual words to you, I do not do it out of private motives. I am delivering God's will to you and giving you the exhortation of the Spirit. I am delivering in His stead the words God wants to speak to you through me.

Everyone, can a person who believes in the Lord oppose God? Surprisingly, he can oppose Him strongly. It is rather because he knows he has been saved. Those who worked with us and left also know and believe that they have received salvation in full. But uniting in the work of delivering the gospel to the whole world, obeying, and living together is God's will; if one refuses that, what happens? Because that refusing is itself the sin of blaspheming the Spirit, he can never again receive the remission of sin.

After being saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is it optional to follow God's will or not? Can one do that and still go to heaven? By no means. If one openly and outright goes against God, it is over. Even if he has received salvation, he ends up severed from God. He builds a wall between himself and God. He may say, You have already saved me, so You cannot cancel it; but if God has fixed another law, it goes according to that law. Are we smarter than God?

The apostle Paul spoke like this. He had received salvation and had also worked much. Yet he said, *"Woe is me if I do not*

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preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16) God's will is to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit and save people; if one shuts his mouth for his own sake, that itself belongs to the sin of opposing God, and he himself comes to be cast away.

The person full of his own thoughts does not grow in faith

The sin of blaspheming the Spirit can be committed even by a Christian. Speaking a word against the Son of Man can receive the remission of sin, but going against the leading of the Spirit who works in the heart of a living man of God is going against the Spirit. Would the Spirit come to you alone and lead you without going through a person? The Spirit is also in your hearts, you who have received the remission of sin. It says that the Spirit knows all our circumstances and makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. The Spirit knows fully how we must be led now. Therefore we must not refuse that leading.

First hear the word, obey, and try doing it. When the one who goes before says, try doing it this way, and you do just so, you experience the problem being solved. Then faith grows. But the person who is crammed full of his own thoughts—who does not receive leading, disregards the will of the Spirit, and disregards the exhortation of the one who goes before—never grows in faith.

The age of the flesh piles up and the body grows frail, but the faith in the heart does not grow. Spiritually he is a little child, yet only his stubbornness grows stronger. Receiving the leading of the Spirit who works in the heart of the one who goes before and leads you—that is receiving the leading of the Spirit and not blaspheming the Spirit.

Listening to the mission reports of our overseas coworkers, I come to discern. Some workers are receiving the leading of the Spirit, and some workers are working on their own. The person crammed full of his own thoughts does not receive leading and merely does the work assigned to him. But the worker who receives leading, though we did not go and teach him in person, delivers the gospel exactly as we do. When we exhort through one worker, do it this way, he obeys that word and does it. That is receiving the leading of the Spirit and not blaspheming the Spirit. The one who works alone may do work, but there is no fruit.

You can tell as soon as you deal with a person. The person who carries on the life of faith by his own thoughts is full of stubbornness, and when you meet him you meet only a very hard outer man. With such a person spiritual fellowship does not go well. But the person whose faith has grown, though his temper is quick and his words are rough, has within him an inner man boundlessly soft and quiet, and you can fellowship with him transparently. That is the difference between having growth of faith and not having it.

The leaders and workers of our districts are those who, when they each return, lead their regions. The flock grows according to the measure of that leader's faith. Therefore only when the leader receives the leading of the Spirit and grows in faith does the flock he leads also grow. If your faith does not grow, you always remain in the same place. Faith does not grow visibly all at once; it grows unseen, before you know it.

Look at those who worked with us and left. Do you know what they have in common? Their first characteristic is that they are exceedingly clever. And they consider their own thoughts to be everything. They never accept exhortation. I exhorted them countless times: that living here, believing the gospel and

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receiving God's will and the leading of the Spirit, is far more profitable than taking one's wealth and going out to live. But they did not listen.

As for me, even if someone threw me great wealth and told me to leave the church, I would never leave. However great the wealth offered, it is so. God's people are here and my kingdom is here—leaving this place, where would I go? Where would I go to deliver this gospel, and where would I go to live united in righteous work? It is not true that with money one can live anywhere.

Here we sing beautiful praise together, hear testimonies, unite in right work, and serve the Lord. This is a life that cannot be exchanged even for ten million in gold. This is my life and the culture of my faith. The righteous must live as the righteous, in the midst of those who live by faith. If a righteous person leaves this place and puts on airs alone, he is only trampled by the world.

When the world grows harder from now on, such things will arise still more strongly. The devil never leaves you alone. He makes you oppose, makes you blaspheme, makes you go against. At such times hold firm: no—receiving the leading is right. If you receive the leading, the way ahead opens. Even what did not work comes to work. Are you perhaps carrying on your life of faith alone? Are you doing it with the heart that says, I know it all, and I too am one who leads others? If you do not receive the leading of the Spirit, you fall into a pit and it is over.

Some may say, is this much not enough? But until the day the Lord comes we must deliver this gospel of the water and the Spirit. When things go well we must follow God's will, and when they do not go well we must follow God's will. Then how can we receive the leading of the Spirit? When the Spirit who is in a living person leads through that person, by receiving that

word and obeying, we can receive the leading of the Spirit. It is not that when you pray privately the Spirit comes to you alone and leads you point by point.

Hear what the Spirit says to the church

The person who is spiritually awake can receive that leading, but the person who is not receives it when he is in a good mood and disregards it when he is in a bad mood. That is why God established the church. Hear the words God speaks to the church. When a man of God who obeys well the will of the Spirit dwelling in the person who has received the remission of sin delivers God's will, that is the leading of the Spirit. It is just as He said, *"Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 2:7).*

God said to Abraham, *"I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you" (Genesis 12:3)*. Why did God do so? Because Abraham was different from ordinary people. When God spoke, he received that word and obeyed. Whether he liked it or not, he followed God's will. That is a truly great thing. That spiritual principle is maintained just the same even now. Therefore we must not commit the sin of blaspheming the Spirit.

The reason I have been able to follow the Lord until now is that I tried not to go against the Spirit and followed by faith, relying on the Lord. Otherwise I could not have come this far. It is the same with you. It is not because you are excellent that you remain in the church. Because the leaders who lead you led you by the Spirit, we have come this far, lacking though we are. It is a thing to be truly thankful for. I too do not consider that I have attained it all. What is past is past; what matters is how we will

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fulfill God's will from now on and in what direction we will go.

Meeting the Lord can be easy. But following the Lord is like walking a narrow way. It is by no means easy. No one teaches it in your stead. You pray and look into the word, and setting your focus on the Lord's will, you apply it to your life.

You may ask how a person saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit could do such a thing, but even a saved person can. After we meet the Lord, the Lord bears with all the weaknesses of our flesh. But if from the heart one refuses and opposes the Lord's will, whether the Lord will take that person to heaven, we cannot know. One thing, however, is certain: serving the gospel is over, the blessings on this earth are over, and even the blessings that come upon his descendants and upon those who meet him are all cut off.

The life that remains as wheat and greets the Lord

All the blessings can be cut off, and one can even be thrown away. The Lord likened the kingdom of heaven to a net. He said, *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away" (Matthew 13:47–48).* The good are gathered into vessels and the bad are thrown away. We hope not to be thrown away. This is what we must fear most: whether I come to stand in the place of blaspheming and opposing the Spirit, or not.

Coming to stand in the place of opposing is the result that comes from habitually going against the words of the leader who leads you. Therefore, obey and follow, and see. Even if it does not seem right to your own thinking, when you obey and do it,

you learn many things. As you come to know that it was the leading of the Spirit, your faith grows. Then it becomes a true profit to you. Later you too will be able to lead those who lack more than you. That is why Paul exhorted Timothy: as I have raised you, so you also raise people.

We cannot overcome this world alone. It is because there is the church that we can live like this. By cutting and deciding everything with individual thought and judgment, we cannot overcome the adversaries of this world. Only by uniting can we overcome. Only when we pray in union is that prayer answered. It is not that one can accomplish anything alone. I earnestly hope that before this word we will all learn, and keep on receiving blessing. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Let us live by faith in the promise the Lord has made

< Matthew 12:22-34 >

"Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, 'Could this be the Son of David?' Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, 'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.' But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. 'Either

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make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Today I would like to share the word on the theme that there is a kingdom God gives to the righteous. God has set apart a kingdom that He gives to us who have become righteous by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, was nailed to the Cross and died and so received the judgment of sin for us, and rose from the dead and became our Savior. God delights to give His kingdom to those who have become righteous. Now we are living in this world. But God has said that He will give us, as a separate gift, the kingdom God has made.

The point is this: God has said that He will give us His kingdom—do we really believe it? God has plainly said that He gives His kingdom to us. Yet we commonly think in our hearts like this: when we die we go to His kingdom, and since He said He would give it, we need only receive it. I will go when I die; He said He would give it, so thank You—we tend to pass over it at about that level. We have this tendency.

The assurance that that kingdom is mine

But we must have the assurance that we who have received the remission of sin have now received that kingdom God gives, that we will go and live there, and that the kingdom of God He spoke of is mine. This assurance is necessary for you and me. God said He gives His kingdom to us; when we hold the

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assurance that that kingdom is mine, a change comes about in our lives. If there is no faith that believes the word of God, it is nothing at all.

Let us think with an example. We consider that since we are saved, when we die we cross the Jordan and receive the kingdom of God. Of course we receive it then. But suppose we received the remission of sin at ten, at twenty, at thirty. Then we go on to live the remaining seventy or eighty years of our life. If through all those years we believe only that we receive the kingdom of God when we die, we gain no strength for living through those long years. A kingdom one enters only by dying gives no great strength to us who live on this earth.

But when there is the assurance of faith that believes the word of God, it is different. We can sell what is ours and possess that kingdom, and live for God in that assurance while we live on this earth. What does the word of God say about this? *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:32–33).*

"Do not fear, little flock"

Jesus said, *"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).* The Lord knew us fully. How few we are! Among the billions of people of the whole world, how very few we are! In your own family, within that family name, how many have received the remission of sin? So He says, do not fear, little flock. He says it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

What kingdom is that kingdom? He is speaking of the kingdom of God. It is not this earth and not this world. He speaks of the kingdom God has made, the world God has made. He gives us another kingdom, another world besides this world. If we do not have this faith and this assurance, we gain no strength in living on this earth, carrying on the life of faith, and serving the Lord. When this faith is in us, we gain the strength of faith and can live for the Lord in a real way.

Sell what you have and provide money bags which do not grow old

Then God said, *"Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys" (Luke 12:33)*. When we believe and are assured of that promise that He gives us the kingdom of God, we come, while living on this earth, to sell what is ours and inherit the kingdom of God which does not grow old. Of course it does not mean that we sell what is ours and buy that kingdom for a price.

If we now believe God's promise that He gives the kingdom of God to us who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, then the kingdom of God is yours and mine. If that kingdom is already yours and mine, would we cling so to the life we live on this earth? That is why He said, sell what you have and make money bags which do not grow old. Since God has given us that kingdom, we do the work of expanding that kingdom and deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and with the hope of going there to live, we carry out on this earth the command God has commanded. This is exactly what the passage is saying.

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If we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the kingdom of God is ours

Do you believe this word, that it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom? If you believe, the kingdom of God is yours and mine. That kingdom is ours—and what has God said to you and me? He told us to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit on this earth. He told us to expand the kingdom of God. There is a kingdom, but the people are few. So He tells us to do the work of expanding that kingdom.

What must we do to expand that kingdom? We sell the talents and everything God has given you and me, and use and spend them on the work of expanding that kingdom. We become such faithful people. If this faith is there, we naturally do so; if there is no faith, it becomes something forced. God said He delights to give the kingdom of God to you and me—I believe it. Do you believe?

Then that kingdom is yours and mine. For the expansion of that kingdom, God has commanded us to serve the Lord and spread the gospel of the water and the Spirit while we live on this earth. He has asked us to do this work and then come. Then is there anything we would grudge in doing this work? He said, sell what you have and use it for the giving that does not perish. If we believe that there is that kingdom He delights to give us, we cannot grudge selling what we have and using it to deliver the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

What would we grudge? I will soon go there and live, and that kingdom is mine and yours—what would we grudge? What is so hard about serving the Lord? Of course it is hard. I am not saying it is not hard. But is the purpose not clear?

A life with a clear purpose bears results

As we work, there are days we work with reward, and days we only do the hard groundwork with no particular result. Even so, however hard it is, we are glad, because we have sold what is ours to buy the kingdom of God which does not grow old, and have done the work of giving this gift to others and saving them. The point is this: the Father said He delights to give His kingdom to you, and He has surely given it. We who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus was baptized by John, that all our sins were passed on to Him, and that He received all the judgment for those sins on the Cross—have already received His kingdom and will live there. While we live on this earth we do the work of preparing for the people who will enter and live in that kingdom—so what problem is hardship? When the purpose is clear, results come. When the purpose is not clear, there are no results.

Therefore our life too must be a life with purpose. When we work, we must do work with purpose. Look at a single flower. To bring one visible flower to bloom, the root and the stem and the leaves labor in places no one recognizes. The leaf receives sunlight and performs photosynthesis and gives nourishment to the root, and as such unseen labor piles up, the flower finally blooms. The labor that does not show has done more for that flower to bloom. In our life of faith after meeting the Lord as well, without this clear faith, life is too wearisome.

Without faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the life of faith is wearisome

People say it is good once you are saved; but after the first

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month or two, when your feet hardly touch the ground for joy, there are times when it becomes hard. The thought even comes, if I went out into the world and lived with this much effort, would I not become very rich? That is why the Lord, in the Lord's Prayer, spoke first of the remission of sin: *"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9)*. Only when we receive the remission of sin are we qualified to call God Father. The way for us to receive the remission of sin is to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus was baptized by John, and all the sins of the world were passed on to Him once and for all. He received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, shedding His blood and dying, rose on the third day, and thus completed our salvation.

And the Lord said, *"Your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10)*. Second, it means we enter His kingdom. It is the word that that kingdom of God is yours and mine. Before entering that kingdom, we are to do the work of giving to others also, so that they too may enter that kingdom. If the sense of purpose is not clear, the life of faith becomes hard and we want to quit. Reckoning by the flesh, the thought even comes, what foolish work is this? I know such thoughts rise in you at times as well. But since the Father said He delights to give you that kingdom, that kingdom of God is surely ours. Then we must help others enter that kingdom, and while doing that work we must meet God. That work does not vanish, does not rot, is not moth-eaten, and remains forever.

The true stars who shine like the stars forever and ever

The Scriptures say, *"Those who turn many to righteousness*

Like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). The true stars are the righteous, that is, you and I and the Lord's workers. In the world there are people who receive various prizes, but they are stars who stand a moment and then fall. The true stars who shine forever are you and I. Do you believe this? Even those who cannot answer aloud, respond to this word with Amen in your hearts, with deep feeling.

We are those who already possess the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is yours and mine. For it we spend what is ours and use it in giving, and we are the stars who do that work. We must live by that faith until we go. This is the life of the righteous who truly believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We live today and live tomorrow, but without this firm faith, life is too tedious and dismal. Let us live holding our faith. If we live holding faith, would it be tedious? It is not tedious.

To the faithful He entrusts new work

Within God's church new work keeps arising. Some think, must I do only this work every day? But when you do the work entrusted to you faithfully, God entrusts that work to another person and entrusts you with work of a richer concentration. God keeps choosing faithful people and lifting them up, entrusting them with new work. The person who is not so always stays in the same place.

Are you now in charge of one field of work within the church? Then you are doing a great work. You may think you are just tagging along, but you have taken charge of one part. I too take charge of one part and work. We are stars. True stars. Jesus Christ is the true Star of heaven, and we who follow Him are His stars as well. I cannot but do this work of delivering the gospel

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of the water and the Spirit, because it is the right work. So it is with you. For God has given me hope and given the kingdom of God to me as my own.

Because I have this faith, because I believe this, I do this work. And I bring others also to take part in this work. Before long we go to that kingdom. Will you not go too? God has entrusted us with this precious work, telling us to make on this earth money bags which do not grow old. Without this faith one can only put on a show. Do you feel a sense of accomplishment in the work you do? Do you know that the work you do is used for a rewarding work? If you know that, you feel accomplishment and enjoy great satisfaction. The Scriptures say, *"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17)*. We live not merely by the faith of having been saved, but by the faith that God has given me the kingdom of God and that that kingdom is mine—living this life of a star with self-respect.

I have lived with this faith until now. Whatever others say to me, I pay it no mind. Whatever those who are not born again say, whatever those who act arrogantly on the strength of a little wealth say, I am not shaken in the least. The wealth of the world is truly fleeting. We have no need to let our hearts be taken by the words of those who boast of such things. For God has made us live by this faith.

If a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it bears much fruit

What I want to say is this. Not I alone—God has given the kingdom to you as well. The kingdom of God is yours. You are doing the work of giving, so that others also may enter that kingdom and live. You are selling what is yours and serving the

Lord now. Using the wisdom and understanding, the bodily health and ability God has given you—spending what is yours—you are doing the work that results in bringing people into this gospel of the water and the Spirit. You are living the life of a star. The Lord said, *"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24).*

These days the gospel of the water and the Spirit is being spread very widely. As we labor hard to produce the books and send them to the whole world, the souls being saved in every part of the world are increasing that much. Tens of thousands steadily visit the website each week, the e-books and paper books go out to many countries, and testimonies keep coming in from many countries. It is hard to find an organization that actually does this work of sending books containing the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the world. Many have said, let us evangelize the whole world, but hardly anyone has actually sent books containing the true gospel. We are doing that work now.

We do not like merely making noise with words. Though we are lacking and a very small flock, we gather little by little and concentrate it and spend it like this. This is exactly the work of making money bags which do not grow old. It is the work of making God's people and bringing them in here. This work does not vanish. The work you and I do is such work.

We do this work today and we do this work tomorrow. There are truly many things to do. But all this labor of preparation is for that kingdom. The day of sunrise is coming. Now is the time to prepare with all our strength.

In my bachelor days I lived alone and went through it all—how toilsome it is to cook rice and prepare side dishes. So I know how thankful a thing it is that our sisters prepare meals for us like this. I hope you also consider it a thing to be thankful for,

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simply that you are eating your meals. The one who has done it with his own hands knows that labor, and so counts it truly thankful.

We are the rich who possess the kingdom of God

There are times when the work you do seems to have no great result right now. When there is no result in what one does, the heart grows gloomy. Yet why is our heart glad even so? Because we are making money bags which do not grow old. The people of the world earn money day by day, but we live hoping for that day when the gospel of the water and the Spirit will be spread greatly. Even now the books are going out to the whole world and the gospel is being spread—how glad our hearts are! The brothers and sisters of those nations are delivering to their own peoples all that we would say, all that you would say—how good, how good it is!

Everyone, above all, we have a kingdom. God has given a kingdom to me and to you, to the righteous. That kingdom is mine and yours. Is this a joke? This is reality and fact and certainty. We are the rich who have a kingdom. We give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The family of God who keep the gospel in their hearts

< Matthew 12:22-50 >

“Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. And all the multitudes were amazed and said, ‘Could this be the Son of David?’ Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, ‘This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.’ But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. ‘Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come. ‘Either

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make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.' Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. 'When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.' While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then

one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'"

The darkness that keeps one from seeing and speaking

People brought to Jesus a man who was demon-possessed, blind, and mute. He could not see what he ought to see, and could not say what he ought to say. When Jesus healed him, he spoke and saw. This event shows that Jesus is the Lord of power who heals the diseases of the body, and at the same time it brings to mind the spiritual state of man placed under sin.

Jesus is the Savior who rules both the spirit and the body of man. He opens closed eyes to see the truth, and opens blocked mouths to speak the righteousness of God. Today the way for the eyes and mouth of the soul to be restored does not lie in chasing mysterious experiences. It lies in hearing and believing the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit which the Holy Spirit testifies to.

Seeing the same thing, people speak differently according to the heart

The multitudes saw this miracle, were amazed, and asked whether Jesus was not the Son of David. They considered the

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possibility that Jesus was the promised Messiah. But the Pharisees, seeing the identical thing, said that Jesus cast out the demons by the help of Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Before their eyes a man had been healed and spoke and saw, yet their stubborn hearts turned a good work upside down into an evil one.

A person's words are not separated from his heart. The humble heart looks back at itself before the word, but the stubborn heart tries to judge the word. Therefore we must look not at what miracles we have seen but at what heart we stand with before the word of God. Without a heart that loves the truth, one can see much evidence and rather grow more stubborn.

A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand

Jesus said that a kingdom or a city or a house divided against itself cannot stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is tearing down his own kingdom himself. The Pharisees' claim was contradictory even logically. What Jesus did was not cooperation with Satan but the work of God setting free a man pressed down by Satan.

Jesus then said that if He casts out demons by the Spirit of God, the kingdom of God has already come. The kingdom of God is not a kingdom that appears only in the distant future. When Jesus the King came and shattered the power of sin and Satan, the reign of God was revealed among people.

Therefore, when discerning spiritual phenomena, we must not look only at who has shown the more amazing thing. We must look at how that teaching testifies of Jesus' salvation—whether it leads people to their own merits, or makes them believe the righteousness of God. The Holy Spirit always works

together with the word of the Scriptures, and turns the sinner's gaze from man to Jesus Christ.

The stronger Savior who bound the strong man

Jesus said that to enter a strong man's house and take his goods, one must first bind that strong man. Here the strong man refers to the power of Satan, who holds people fast with sin and falsehood. The sinner cannot completely escape that power by his own wisdom or resolution alone. But Jesus came as the One stronger than Satan.

This victory is not obtained by incantations or special ceremonies. It is the victory enjoyed when one believes with the heart the salvation Jesus completed. Satan can shake the heart by bringing up our weaknesses and failures, but faith looks not at one's own state but at the righteousness the Lord has completed. Because Jesus who bound the strong man is our Savior, the believer overcomes accusation within the word and can serve God.

The faith that gathers together with the Lord

Jesus said that he who is not with Him is against Him, and he who does not gather with Him scatters. Concerning Jesus Christ one cannot remain neutral forever. Either one believes and receives the salvation He accomplished, or one puts one's own thoughts first and rejects it.

To gather together with the Lord does not mean drawing people into one's own following. It is leading them to the kingdom of God by having them receive the remission of sin

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through the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The worker of the gospel is not a person who leaves his own name behind, but a person who testifies to the righteousness Jesus accomplished so that souls return to the Lord.

The stubbornness that blasphemes the Spirit

Jesus said that every sin and blasphemy of man receives remission, but blaspheming the Spirit does not receive remission. This word does not mean that there is unconditionally no hope for the person who grieves over his weakness or doubted for a moment. The Pharisees of the passage, even while seeing the clear work of salvation manifested by the Spirit, deliberately turned it over and called it the work of Satan.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the ministry of Jesus Christ who saved sinners. Therefore the person who keeps refusing the testimony of the Spirit, slanders as evil the salvation God accomplished, and does not believe to the very end, is rejecting the very way of receiving the remission of sin. Because there is no other Savior and no other gospel, if one defies that gospel to the end, one cannot receive remission.

Neither must the matter of blaspheming the Spirit be narrowed down to merely not following the words of a particular person. Anyone can speak wrongly, and even a leader must be discerned under the word. The core of the passage lies in this: though the Spirit plainly testifies to the salvation of Jesus Christ, they turned that truth over as the work of Satan and opposed it to the very end. Therefore every teaching must be confirmed by the recorded word, and must be received by faith when it accords with the gospel.

The gospel of the water and the blood which the Holy Spirit testifies to

We must know clearly what the testimony of the Spirit is. First John 5:6–8 says, *"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).*

Here the water refers to the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist. Jesus was without sin, but to take on the sins of mankind He received baptism from John the Baptist. At that time all the sins of the world passed over to Jesus, and Jesus carried those sins and went to the Cross. The blood refers to the judgment by which Jesus paid the price of our sins in our place on the Cross. And the Spirit testifies that this salvation of the water and the blood is true and was accomplished according to the will of God.

If one leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist and speaks only of the blood of the Cross, it is not clear what sins Jesus carried and was judged for. Conversely, one cannot speak of the baptism alone apart from the blood of the Cross and the resurrection. Jesus took on sin with the water, received the judgment of that sin with the blood, and overcame death with the resurrection. The Spirit gives the assurance of the remission of sin to the heart that believes this one complete gospel.

When we believe this gospel with the heart, the remission of sin becomes not a vague expectation but an assurance grounded on the word. The Holy Spirit does not make a person insist by himself that he has no sin. He makes him believe the fact that

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God has removed sin in Jesus, and on the ground of that word makes him call God Father.

The fruit reveals the nature of the tree

Jesus spoke the parable of the tree and its fruit. From a good tree comes good fruit, and from a bad tree comes bad fruit. This is the word that the fundamental state of the heart matters more than a few outwardly polished actions. When the heart is full of sin and self-righteousness, evil words come out as circumstances turn; but from the heart that has received the remission of sin through the gospel and holds God's grace come words that acknowledge the righteousness of God.

A person can show a good appearance for a while by correcting his manner of speech and making his conduct tidy. But that alone does not change the nature of the tree. First the heart must be washed by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When the sinner admits his sin and believes the word that Jesus has removed all those sins, God declares him righteous and gives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Even after that, the believer's flesh is weak and can fail. Yet the truth of salvation does not change because of that. The believer admits his fault before the word and turns back, but does not try again to wash his sins with his own works. He believes the righteousness of the Lord who has already taken on the sins, and sets his heart and life right so as to bear fruit worthy of that grace.

The confession concerning salvation is especially important. One cannot say with the mouth only that one is righteous while believing in the heart that one's sins still remain. And the person who, though his feelings are lacking, believes with the heart the

word that Jesus has removed all sins, can acknowledge the righteousness of God. The confession of faith is not a word exalting oneself but a word exalting what the Lord has done.

The death and resurrection the sign of Jonah points to

The scribes and Pharisees demanded yet another sign from Jesus. Already many sick people had been healed and demon-possessed people had been set free, but to a heart that had determined not to believe, no number of signs was enough. Jesus said that no sign would be shown except the sign of Jonah.

As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, Jesus too would die and be in the earth and rise on the third day. This sign clearly testifies that Jesus is the Savior who carried our sins and died and overcame the power of death. The Cross and the resurrection are not an accidental tragedy and recovery, but the history of salvation accomplished according to the Scriptures.

But for Jesus' death to become our salvation, the fact that He took on our sins must first be clear. Because the sin of the world was passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He could die on the Cross in our place. And by rising again He showed that that redemption is complete and that the power of death has been broken. The sign of Jonah plainly shows, within the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the victory of the Cross and the resurrection.

Jesus said that at the judgment the men of Nineveh will condemn this generation. The men of Nineveh turned at the preaching of Jonah. The queen of the South also came a long way to hear the wise words of Solomon. Yet though Jesus,

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greater than Jonah and greater than Solomon, stood before them, the Pharisees did not believe.

The person who turns before the truth admits that the tradition of a denomination or an old habit cannot come before the word. If until now one has believed the gospel of the blood only, one must look again in the word at the meaning of the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist. Turning toward the word when one's own thinking differs from the Scriptures is true repentance.

The danger of the heart that is empty and repaired

Jesus spoke the parable of the unclean spirit that goes out of a man and, returning to find the house empty, swept, and repaired, brings in seven other spirits more wicked than itself. Even if the outward life is put in order and bad habits are cast off, if the heart is empty the fundamental problem has not been solved. Moral improvement alone does not change the master of the soul.

A person can, by resolution, quit drinking and smoking, reduce his temper, and practice religion diligently. Such changes are not bad in themselves. But if the gospel of the remission of sin is not in the heart and the Holy Spirit does not dwell there, self-righteousness and false assurance can rather settle in more firmly. One can become a person outwardly cleaner than before and yet rejecting the gospel more strongly.

The core of this parable does not lie in teaching a special method of casting out demons. It teaches with what the empty heart must be filled. In a person's heart there must be the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When one believes the truth that Jesus took on all one's sins through the baptism He

received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and rose again, one's heart is no longer an empty house without a master.

Even afterward the heart must not be left untended. Even a saved believer, if he keeps taking in only the desires of the world and his own thoughts, can find his spiritual discernment dimmed. Salvation does not vanish, but the heart can darken and lose thanksgiving and service. Therefore the life of hearing the word within the church, meditating anew on the gospel, and having fellowship with the brothers and sisters of faith is necessary.

The faith that keeps the gospel in the heart

Receiving the remission of sin does not mean that one no longer needs to hear the word of the gospel. The believer discovers his weakness daily, and hears the voice of the world and the accusation of Satan. At such times, if the gospel is faint in his heart, he easily looks at his own works and falls into condemnation again. Therefore we must keep holding the gospel in our hearts—not to change the salvation already received, but to stand firm within the completed salvation.

Satan asks, 'How can you be righteous when you are so lacking?' Faith answers, 'I was not made righteous because I am perfect; I have been justified because Jesus took on all my sins and was judged.' This is not a word that one may sin at will. Rather, because one knows the grace received without price, one hates sin and gains strength to live following God's will.

The person who keeps the gospel in his heart does not make his own feelings the final verdict whenever hardship comes. He returns to the recorded word. He confirms again by faith the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the

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Cross, and the resurrection from the dead. Within that word his heart gains new strength, and he returns to the place of delivering the gospel and serving the brothers and sisters.

The family of God who do the Father's will

When Jesus' mother and brothers came and stood outside, Jesus pointed to His disciples and said that whoever does the will of God is His brother and sister and mother. This does not mean to disregard the fleshly family. It means that the family of the kingdom of God is established on a spiritual relationship deeper than bloodline.

Then what is the Father's will? It is first to believe in the Son God sent, and to receive the salvation that Son accomplished. Those who believe Jesus' gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin become children of God born of one Father. Though background and personality and nation differ, because they have received new life through the same gospel, they become spiritual brothers and sisters.

Living according to the Father's will does not end at calling one another brother and sister with the mouth only. It is not seeking only one's own profit but serving the gospel together, holding up the weak members, and having fellowship with one another in the truth. Those who have become one family through the gospel do not set up each one's own boast but seek together the profit of the kingdom of God.

Matthew chapter 12 contrasts the stubbornness of the Pharisees who turned the truth into evil with the figure of the disciples who believed the word and became God's family. Our hearts must not stand empty. We must hold clearly in our hearts the gospel of the water and the blood which the Holy Spirit

testifies to. We must believe the truth that Jesus completely removed our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, and with that faith speak the righteousness of God, gather souls together with the Lord, and live serving the family of God. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The one who does the will of My Father is My brother and sister and family

< Matthew 12:46-50 >

"While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.'"

The weather has grown truly cold. It is the season when we long for times of sitting around a warm bonfire, sharing warmth and sharing affection. I hope that in this winter, too, we will have many such warm times. But the world is still unsettled. Today, through the word of Matthew chapter 12, I would like to look together at who is truly our brother and sister and family.

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Those who harm others and those who benefit others

In this world there are those who threaten others and seize what belongs to others, seeking to live well by themselves alone. They threaten to do harm if others do not listen to them, and try to make what is another's their own. Such people are no different from the tyrants in history who tried to swallow up the world. Every one of them harmed others and seized what was others' so as to fill only themselves. But such people were all put to death and perished.

The person who seeks to harm others suffers just as much harm himself. The Scriptures say that he who digs a pit falls into it, and he who breaks through a wall is bitten by a serpent. The one who seeks to harm others is ruined in this present world and reaches hell in the world to come.

On the contrary, the person who seeks to benefit others gains just as much benefit himself. First of all, his heart grows bright. When one holds the heart that says, I must benefit that person, the spiritual eyes open, and spirit and body grow healthy together. But the person who tries to seize what is another's first grows dark in his heart. Since the heart is dark, the body also sickens, and one cannot know when some calamity will strike. The heart that seeks to harm others is itself a curse.

What decides a person's life is what he believes

In the world there are those who read the lay of the land to find auspicious sites, and those who read faces to tell a person's future. But however good the spot where one's ancestors are laid, if the heart of the living person himself is not right and he does

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not live with a heart for others, that person is already ruined.

There was once a Christian writer. Even while lying on a sickbed he delivered this truth: however good one's face may be, better than the face is the countenance of the heart, and better than the countenance of the heart is faith. According to what faith a person holds, everything about him is decided and changed. Those who read faces are, to put it kindly, people who make money by physiognomy; to put it harshly, they are people who seize on others' weaknesses and extract money. They make people anxious by telling them that their name is inauspicious, that their fortune based on their birth date and time is unfavorable, and that some part of their face needs to be altered. But even if one did everything they say, true happiness does not come.

What decides a person's life is what he believes. According to whether he believes God, according to what he believes, his life is decided. Next, the heart must be good. The person who seeks to live by threatening others and squeezing what is theirs has already entered into a curse. Such a person is never happy his whole life. He resents and slanders others, his heart aches and his body aches, and even his thinking sickens.

Such a person rather thinks himself the cleverest. He considers that there is nothing he does wrong in this world. Therefore he has nothing to apologize for, and no need to listen to anyone. He says he is never wrong and the other party is always wrong. And he counts others foolish, thinking that others are taken in by him and hand over what they have. There are truly many such people.

But before God anyone can do wrong. When one has done wrong, one must admit the wrong, and the heart must bow down meekly. The ordinary person is so. But some insist that they are absolutely without fault. And so they live their whole lives

deceiving others. They find out the other's situation and weaknesses and try to manipulate his heart. At first they strive to make him their own, and at the last they threaten and intimidate. But however they do, in the end the only unhappy one is their own self.

Those who make material things their god are the same. For them, if there is even a small loss in material things, the other at once becomes an enemy. Even the relationship of parent and child becomes enmity before material things. The word we have read today makes us think again about such relationships.

"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

While Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, His mother and brothers stood outside. Jesus had several brothers. That fact appears in the Scriptures as well. The people were so many that Jesus' mother could not get near her son. So one person, with an anxious heart, spoke to Jesus. He reported that His mother and brothers had come and were waiting outside, seeking to speak with Him.

Then Jesus answered and spoke. It is written, *"Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother'" (Matthew 12:48–50)*. It is the word that the fleshly mother and brothers are not simply His brothers and sisters as such. It is the word that only the one who does the will of God is truly His brother and sister. They are brothers and sisters of the flesh only; spiritually, only the one who does the Father's will is His brother and sister—that is what He said.

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Then who is the one who does the Father's will here? It is those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit: that Jesus, with the baptism He received from John, shouldered all the sins of the world once and for all, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and came alive again on the third day. Those who believe this gospel and have received the remission of sin and become children of God are the very ones who do the Father's will, and the true family of Jesus.

The one who does the Father's will is My family

Within the church we call one another brother and call one another sister. To call someone so means that he is my family. But how is the fleshly family? When the parents leave this world, the fleshly family easily scatters. It holds together for a while, but when money matters get entangled, the brothers leave and the family members stop coming. Some are even afraid the phone might ring. This is what one commonly sees in this world. Of course there are families that are not so. But even where there is affection among poor brothers, when they divide into those who live well and those who do not, that affection often cools. They are not truly the same family.

But those who have been saved spiritually are different. It is exactly as Jesus said. Whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and My sister. If someone has been saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and does the will of the same Father, he is my household and my family.

Everyone, can you do a bad thing to your own family? Can you wish your own family to become unhappy? Can you hinder the work your own family does? Can you fail to care for your

own family? You cannot. If you and I have truly been saved, God's people are not strangers but my family. They are your family and my family.

Therefore we must care for one another, look into one another's hearts, and soothe one another's hearts. We must look to and supply what the body needs, and when the weather is cold, share what is warm. Those who hold such a heart of caring for one another are the ones who truly do the Father's will.

Discern the one who calls you brother and uses you

But there are people who say brother and sister with the mouth, while trying to use the other to take their own profit. Such a person is neither brother nor sister. We must discern this well. If there is someone who defrauds you, seizes your rights, takes your possessions and your thoughts to make them his own, and keeps you from serving the Lord, you must be careful. You must discern in your heart that such a person is a thief and a swindler, and keep it in mind.

On the contrary, if there is a person who does the Father's will, whether he is old or young, he is worthy of respect. When we see God's workers, respect wells up in our hearts.

How could we carelessly despise a brother? Could we despise someone because he has learned less than we have? The learning of the world is nothing but elementary learning. It is only knowing as common sense what one ought to know. In fact, the more one knows of the things of the world, the better fitted one is to swindle. That is why those who have learned much steal more, and those called clever swindle more. But the person who does not know himself to be great lives faithfully instead.

It is so with children too. A child raised from childhood with

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everything indulged and no hardship often does not look after his parents when he grows up. But a child who helped with the housework and went through hardship in childhood is devoted to his parents. On television come the stories of children who strip their parents of all their property and then abandon them. In our life, whether one has learned much or little of the things of the world is not what matters.

Though we are young, it is a blessing to meet and believe in the Lord, to do the work in which He delights, and to share joys and sorrows together in that work. The person who builds affection among the brothers and unites, who rejoices and gives thanks when God's will is well accomplished, and grieves and is indignant when God's will is not accomplished, belongs to those who do the Father's will. The future of such a person is bright. As time goes on he advances on a more blessed path and receives greater blessing. But the person who within the church takes only his own profit and reckons only his own rights grows darker as time goes on. Such a person is like the setting sun.

Count the spiritual relationship more precious

Jesus speaks again. Who is My brother and who is My sister? Only the one who does My Father's will is My brother and My sister. Jesus was not denying the relationship of the flesh. He was saying only that the fleshly relationship is not the only true relationship. The true relationship is the spiritual relationship.

The spiritual relationship is the relationship of having become children of one Father within the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those born again of this gospel are truly your brothers and sisters and family. Therefore you and I must also count the spiritual relationship more precious. The person who puts the

fleshly relationship first has many problems. Such a person forms factions and takes sides. He tries to make what is another's his own, and tries to make even what is God's his own.

Who is your family? Is only the person who treats you well in the flesh your family? Is not the person who works spiritually, who is for God and lives according to God's will, your family? If you consider someone not family because he does not treat you well in the flesh, that is a wrong thought. Such thinking must be changed. We are people who live together on this earth and will also live together forever in the kingdom of God.

By the fruit the tree is known

We are brothers and sisters who do the Father's will, communing with one another and sharing our hearts, uniting and living according to the Father's will, and going to the kingdom of heaven according to the Father's will. Therefore we must live well by faith. Look to see whether there is among us anyone living a life directly opposite to the Father's will, and keep it in your heart. Do not expose it outwardly and quarrel; discern it well by faith and deal with it. God does not pull out the tares of this world at once. He is longsuffering and waits.

Jesus spoke of the wheat and the chaff. He said that by the fruit the tree is known. By a rough outward look one cannot tell. Whether that person is truly my brother or sister is hard to know in most cases. But there is one way to know. See whether he is a person who truly opens my future and leads me toward the bright light, or a person who darkens me, uses me, grieves me, and makes things a curse to me. By the fruit the tree is known. If I lead you into sorrow, I am a fake.

Ordinary people do not know this, but the person of God

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knows. I do not know all your inward parts, but when I see you living for the Lord, I can know. I can tell whether one lives for the Lord with his whole heart, or does it merely going through the motions. Even doing the same work, one person does it according to the Father's will, and another does it for himself. The fruit reveals the person.

I always tell you: I want everything to be transparent. In serving the Lord I do not want to do as I please beyond what is strictly necessary. Even in money matters I do not want to handle it with my own hands, but to have an accountant in charge. Only so can I keep from going wrong and be blameless. I do not need a room of my own. Wherever I go, if there is a place to rest, that is enough. Living like this is the way of serving the brothers and sisters without using them.

To be the same household is to cherish one another fairly

Even in raising animals the heart is revealed. The person who truly cherishes his dog regards that dog as his own family. When the dog is sick, his own heart aches too. But a hard-hearted person considers it enough to slaughter and eat it. I am very fond of dogs. Once a deacon brought a puppy, and my heart was quite captivated by its darling look. So I entrusted it to a sister who loves dogs, to raise it well.

But raising several dogs, one thing always weighs on my heart. If I take only one out for a walk, the other dogs seem to feel left out. So I cannot favor any one of them. If we hold such a heart even toward animals, how much more if we are the same household? If we truly respect one another, there can be no such thing as cherishing one and not cherishing another. We must

cherish and love one another fairly.

Let us live well together until the day the Lord comes

Jesus spoke. Who is My brother and My sister? Only the one who does My Father's will is My brother and sister. The fleshly brothers and sisters are not the only brothers and sisters. The spiritual relationship is more important.

You and I are brothers and sisters to one another. We are people who will live our whole lives for the Lord and then meet the Lord. The harder the world becomes, the better we must live. The heart must be warm and full. In hard times we must eat better and live better, and we must prepare in advance in order to live so. Seeing the world grow harder and harder, I consider it truly well done that we have prepared many things for the brothers and sisters.

All this work I do is to serve the Lord and to feed you. The material things you give, I do not handle carelessly. I set up a system so that I do not touch it. I do not try to possess too much; I want us to use it fittingly and live well together. Having met on this earth as the same brothers and sisters, let us eat well and live well and then meet the Lord.

The weather is growing cold. When you return home, boil a good pot of warm soup and eat plenty. When we share what is warm, the heart also grows warm. I too will strive all the more for you. Regarding one another as brothers and sisters, sharing what we have and cherishing one another, let us live well. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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Matthew Chapter 13

< Matthew 13:1-58 >

“On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: ‘Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’ And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: ‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing,

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And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. 'Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.' Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you

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gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.' Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.' All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.' Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear,

let him hear! ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Have you understood all these things?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.’ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, ‘Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’ So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.’ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

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1) Summary of the entire content

Matthew chapter 13 is the chapter in which Jesus taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through many parables. Here the kingdom of heaven does not mean only a place one enters after death. It refers together to the reign of God begun through Jesus, the salvation that comes upon the person who receives His word, and the kingdom of God to be completed on the last day.

The overall flow of this chapter is clear. The word of the kingdom of heaven is spread in the world, but not all people receive it in the same way. The kingdom of God looks small and insignificant at first, but it surely grows. In the present world those who belong to God and those who belong to the wicked one exist together, but on the last day they are surely separated. Therefore a person must realize the value of the kingdom of heaven and receive it by faith.

1. The parable of the sower (verses 1–9)

Jesus told the parable of the sower to the great multitudes gathered by the sea. The seed fell by the wayside, on stony places, among thorns, and on good ground. The same person sowed the same seed, but the results differed according to the state of the ground the seed fell on.

The seed that fell by the wayside the birds devoured, and the seed that fell on stony places immediately sprang up but withered in the sun because it had no root. The seed that fell among thorns was choked as the thorns grew up, and the seed that fell on good ground bore fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold.

What stands at the center of this parable is not a problem of the seed but the state of the ground. The word of God is spread

the same to all, but entirely different results appear according to what the heart of the person who hears that word is like.

2. The reason Jesus spoke in parables (verses 10–17)

The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the people in parables. Jesus said that to the disciples it had been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the people whose hearts were hardened it had not been given.

A parable serves to explain the truth of the kingdom of heaven in a way easy to grasp, but at the same time it also serves to expose the state of the hearer's heart. The person who seeks the truth asks the meaning of the parable and tries to understand it, but the person who has closed his heart does not accept its meaning even when he hears the word. Therefore a parable is a word that reveals the truth and at the same time a word that exposes the hardened heart.

Jesus said that what the disciples saw and heard was blessed. For the saving work of God that the prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament had longed to see actually appeared through Jesus.

3. The explanation of the four kinds of ground (verses 18–23)

Jesus explained the parable of the sower directly to His disciples. The seed is the word of the kingdom, and the four kinds of ground represent the different hearts of those who hear the word.

The heart like the wayside does not understand the word even when it hears it, and so the wicked one snatches away the word sown in that heart. The heart like the stony places at first receives the word with joy, but it has no root within. So when hardship or persecution arises because of the word, it

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immediately stumbles. The heart like the thorns hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word so that it bears no fruit.

The good ground is the heart of the person who hears the word and understands it. The words good ground do not mean that the person is good and righteous from the beginning. They mean that he opens his heart before the word of God and understands and receives its meaning. In the person who has truly received the word, the fruit of life appears, each according to his measure.

4. The parable of the wheat and the tares (verses 24–30, 36–43)

A man sowed good seed in his field, but an enemy came at night and sowed tares among the wheat. The servants wanted to pull up the tares, but the owner said to let both grow together until the harvest, since in gathering up the tares they might uproot the wheat as well.

Jesus explained this parable concretely. He who sows the good seed is Jesus, the Son of Man; *"the field is the world,"* the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed the tares is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

In the present world good and evil, true faith and false faith, exist together. For now, who belongs to God may not be fully revealed. But on the last day Jesus surely distinguishes them. Those who practice evil receive judgment, and the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Therefore the center of this parable is not that evil should be left alone, but that the final judgment and verdict belong to God. Man's hasty judgment can go wrong, but the Lord's last

judgment is exact.

5. The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven (verses 31–35)

A mustard seed is a very small seed, but when it grows it becomes like a great tree and the birds come and nest in its branches. Leaven too is a small amount at first, but when it enters the meal it finally leavens the whole.

The kingdom of God may look small and feeble at first, but by the life within it, it surely grows and expands. The work of the gospel that began with Jesus and a few disciples looked insignificant in the eyes of the world of that day. But the gospel of the kingdom keeps being spread in the world and comes to influence many people.

We can understand that the mustard seed shows outward growth, and the leaven shows the change that quietly arises from within. The word of God enters a person's heart and changes his thoughts, his values, and the direction of his life. That work may be hard to see at first, but in the end it produces a clear result.

6. The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price (verses 44–46)

A man found treasure hidden in a field, and rejoicing greatly, he sold all that he had and bought that field. And a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, when he found one pearl of great price, sold all that he had and bought it.

Both parables teach the fact that the value of the kingdom of heaven cannot be compared with anything in the world. In the man who found the treasure, the joy of an unexpected discovery is emphasized; in the pearl merchant, the figure of one who at last finds what he had long been seeking is

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emphasized. The process of discovery differs, but both men, once they realized its value, completely changed the priorities of their lives.

The words that a man sells all that he has do not mean that one buys salvation with possessions or works. They mean that to the person who has realized the value of the kingdom of heaven, God's salvation and reign become far more precious than the things he used to regard as most important. The person who has truly found the kingdom of heaven does not forsake everything by compulsion, but makes a new choice because of the joy of having found the treasure.

7. The parable of the dragnet (verses 47–50)

The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, gathering fish of every kind. When the net was full, the fishermen drew it to shore, gathered the good into vessels, and threw the bad away.

The gospel of the kingdom is spread widely in the world and gathers all kinds of people into it. But the mere fact of having heard the gospel or of outwardly belonging to the crowd does not guarantee final salvation. At the end of the age the angels come and separate the righteous and the wicked.

The parable of the dragnet, like the parable of the tares, emphasizes the last judgment. At present many people look mixed together, but at the last, what each person believes and to whom each person belongs is clearly revealed.

8. The scribe who brings out things new and old (verses 51–52)

Jesus asked the disciples whether they had understood all these words, and the disciples answered that they had. Then Jesus said that every scribe who has become a disciple of the

kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

The disciple of Jesus must not stop at hearing the word and knowing it alone. He must rightly understand the word of God promised in the Old Testament and the truth of the kingdom of heaven newly revealed through Jesus, and be able to deliver them to people as the need arises. It is not a matter of discarding the old unconditionally or insisting only on the new, but of knowing and teaching how the promise of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus.

9. Jesus rejected in His own country (verses 53–58)

When Jesus went to His own country and taught in the synagogue, the people were astonished at His wisdom and mighty works. But rather than believing Jesus' word, they looked only at His family and the background He grew up in. Because they knew Jesus as the carpenter's son, they could not accept the fact that He was the One sent by God.

The unbelief of the people of His hometown reveals how the parable of the sower appears in actual life. The people of His hometown directly heard Jesus' word and saw His power, but because of familiarity and preconceptions they did not believe. The very fact that they had known Jesus up close rather hindered true faith.

The words that Jesus did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief do not mean that man's faith produces Jesus' power. It is not that Jesus lacked power; it means that He did not repeatedly show signs to those who stubbornly rejected Him.

The central meaning of Matthew chapter 13

The word of the kingdom of heaven has already been sown

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in the world. But not everyone who hears that word receives salvation. There are also those who do not understand the word, or who receive it with joy for a while and then stumble before tribulation, or who are choked by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and bear no fruit.

On the other hand, the person who receives the word into his heart and understands it bears fruit. The work of the kingdom of God may at first be small like a mustard seed and invisible like leaven, but it surely grows and spreads. The person who has realized the value of the kingdom of heaven rejoices like the man who found the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price, and regards it as most precious.

But now is the time when the wheat and the tares, the good fish and the bad, are together. On the last day Jesus clearly divides all people. Therefore what matters is not merely having heard the word or thinking that one knows Jesus, but hearing the word of the kingdom of heaven with the heart, understanding and believing it, and bearing the fruit of that faith.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 13 teaches the fact that the word of the kingdom of heaven, sown in the world, arouses various responses but surely grows, and that on the last day those who have truly received that word and those who have rejected it are clearly divided.

2) Matthew chapter 13 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

The many parables of Matthew chapter 13 teach the different results that appear when the word of the kingdom of heaven is sown in people’s hearts. Some hear the word and do

not understand it, some receive it for a while and then cast it away, and some bear no fruit because of the cares of the world and greed. But the person who receives the word into his heart and believes receives the remission of sin, becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God, and bears much fruit.

Here there is something we must first distinguish. Matthew chapter 13 itself does not directly explain Jesus' baptism and the Cross in every parable. The center of which the passage directly speaks is 'the word of the kingdom of heaven' and the responses of those who hear it. But when we examine the concrete content of that word of the kingdom along the flow of the whole Gospel of Matthew, it is connected with the gospel by which Jesus saved sinners with the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth that Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in the body of a man, took on all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, carried those sins and was judged on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose from the dead to become the perfect Savior. The baptism the Lord received from John was not a mere religious ceremony to show humility; as the sinner's sins were passed onto the sacrificial offering of the Old Testament through the laying on of hands, it was the event of righteousness that passed all the sins of the world onto Jesus' body. The Holy Spirit testifies to this truth of salvation, and gives the remission of sin and new life to the heart of the person who believes this gospel.

1. The parable of the sower shows the gospel being spread to people's hearts (verses 1–9, 18–23)

Jesus said that the seed fell by the wayside, on stony places, among thorns, and on good ground. The seed is the word of the kingdom of heaven. Seen at the level of the gospel of the water

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and the Spirit, this seed is the word of life that Jesus saved sinners through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The heart like the wayside is the heart that hears the gospel but does not understand its meaning. It knows that Jesus was crucified, but does not try to know why He first had to receive baptism from John at the Jordan River. It does not receive into the heart whose sins the Lord took on by receiving baptism, and the penalty of what sin He received on the Cross. When one hears the word only superficially like that, the wicked one comes and snatches away the word of life sown in the heart.

The heart like the stony places is the heart that rejoices when it hears the gospel but fails to take root in the word. It hears that its sins have all been washed away and rejoices for a while, but when the opposition of family, religious slander, or the mockery and hardship of the world arise, it soon casts the gospel away. It is because such a person accepted the gospel of the water and the Spirit only as knowledge, and did not establish deep in his heart the faith that the word of God is true.

The heart like the thorns is the heart in which, though it hears the gospel, the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word. If one regards money, honor, and the comfort of the flesh as greater than the remission of sin and eternal life, the word of the gospel cannot bear fruit in that heart. This does not mean that pursuing what is needed to live in the world is itself sin. But if the things of the world become the master of the heart and push out the salvation and eternal life God has given, that heart becomes a field of thorns.

The good ground is the person who hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit, understands it, and believes it with the heart. The words good ground do not mean a person who is good and without sin from the beginning. Rather, they mean the heart that admits that it is a sinner who cannot wash away

its own sins, and receives just as the word says the salvation God has accomplished.

The person like the good ground believes that when Jesus received baptism from John, all his sins were passed onto the Lord, that the Lord carried those sins and was judged on the Cross, and that He rose again and saved him completely. By that faith sin disappears from his heart and he gives thanks to God, and he comes to bear the fruit of serving the gospel and preaching the word of salvation to others.

2. The mystery of the kingdom of heaven is opened to those who humbly receive the word (verses 10–17)

Jesus said that to the disciples it had been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the people whose hearts were hardened it had not been given. This does not mean that God saves some and casts away others without any reason. The difference in knowing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven lies in whether one lays down his own thoughts before the word, or stubbornly holds to his own judgment to the end.

The person whose heart is hardened exalts the religious doctrines and traditions he has learned rather than asking what God has said. Saying, "It is enough to believe only in the Cross of Jesus," he may not even try to know why Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist. Even though the Scriptures testify to Jesus' baptism and the Cross together, if it does not fit his own thoughts he does not accept it.

But the person who knows the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven humbles his own thoughts before God. He asks before the word, "Why did Jesus, who has no sin, receive baptism from John?" And through the words Jesus spoke, "*For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness,*" he realizes that the Lord's baptism was the righteous work of God to save sinners.

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The truth of the kingdom of heaven is not discovered by human wisdom or theological knowledge alone. To the person who acknowledges the word of God as the word of God and opens his heart to hear it, the Holy Spirit makes its meaning understood.

3. The good seed and the tares reveal the difference between the true gospel and false faith (verses 24–30, 36–43)

Jesus explained directly that He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, and the tares are the sons of the wicked one. Therefore the primary meaning of the passage is that those who belong to God and those who belong to the wicked one exist together in the world until the last day.

Applied at the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the good seed refers to the gospel of life that completely washes away people's sin, and to the person who believes that gospel and has received the remission of sin. Jesus had the sin of the world passed onto His own body through the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross shedding His blood because of those sins, and rose again and made us righteous. The person who believes this fact with the heart receives the remission of sin not by his own works but by the righteousness the Lord accomplished.

By contrast, the tares look similar to wheat but bear no grain. Applied to the gospel, the tares can represent false teachings that look similar to the true gospel but cannot completely wash away sin. If one speaks of the Cross of Jesus but leaves out the fact that He took on sin through His baptism, or teaches that a person must keep washing away his own sins with repeated prayers of repentance and good deeds to receive the remission of sin, sin still remains in that person's heart.

The true gospel testifies to Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection as one. If the Lord had not taken on sin with His baptism, there would have been no sin for Him to be judged for on the Cross. Conversely, if Jesus had only taken on sin and had not died on the Cross shedding His blood, the penalty of sin would not have been resolved. And if the Lord had not risen again, the victory of salvation would not have been completed. Therefore the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the gospel that believes all these events of salvation as one.

Now the wheat and the tares seem to grow together, but at the last the Lord surely distinguishes them. A person's denomination, office, and outward appearance do not make him wheat. What matters is whether the true faith of the remission of sin is in his heart, and whether he is believing just as the word says the salvation God has accomplished.

4. The mustard seed and the leaven show the power of life the gospel of the water and the Spirit has (verses 31–33)

A mustard seed is small, but when it grows it becomes a great tree, and a little leaven leavens the whole lump of meal. The kingdom of God may look small and insignificant at first, but it surely grows.

The event of Jesus receiving baptism at the Jordan River may also look like a small and ordinary event in people's eyes. Many people think of it as no more than a ceremony opening Jesus' public ministry. But in that baptism is contained the righteousness of God by which He took on all the sins of mankind. When one believes in that baptism the Lord received from John, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection, all sin is washed from that person's heart and the kingdom of God begins there.

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The gospel is at first like a small seed planted in one person's heart. But when that person receives the remission of sin and preaches the gospel to another, the kingdom of God is established in yet another heart. In this way the gospel of the water and the Spirit keeps being spread beyond nations and languages.

As leaven works unseen inside the meal, the gospel too brings about change from within a person's heart. It makes the sinner cast away his own righteousness and believe in the righteousness of God, and it makes the person who was bound by condemnation and fear enjoy the peace of the remission of sin. It also turns the heart of the person who used to live only for his own flesh, so that he lives serving the gospel.

5. The treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great price show the value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (verses 44–46)

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field and like a pearl of great price. At the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, this treasure is the perfect remission of sin God has accomplished in Jesus.

People regard money, honor, and health as precious, but with these things they can neither remove the sin of the heart nor escape eternal judgment. But when a person discovers the fact that Jesus had all his sins passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John, received the penalty of those sins in his place on the Cross, and rose again and saved him, he comes to know that there is no treasure more precious than this.

The words that the man who found the treasure sold all that he had do not mean that one buys the kingdom of heaven at the price of money or sacrifice. The remission of sin and eternal life are given by grace and received by faith. We can

understand that selling all that one has means laying down the thoughts of one's own, one's own righteousness, and one's religious traditions that one used to regard as more precious than the truth.

However precious one's own theology, denomination, and long career of faith may be, they cannot be exalted above the word of God. If the Scriptures testify that Jesus took on sin with His baptism and was judged on the Cross, a person must cast away his own thoughts and receive that word. The person who has truly found the treasure does not give up his old faith by compulsion but lays it down rejoicing. For to him the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has washed away all his sins is more precious than anything in the world.

6. The parable of the dragnet shows the spread of the gospel and the last judgment (verses 47–50)

The kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, gathering fish of every kind. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not for a particular nation or for special people only. Since all people are sinners, this gospel must be spread to all people in the whole world.

But the mere fact of having come into the net does not make everyone a good fish. The fact that one has heard the gospel, the fact that one has attended a gathering where the gospel of the water and the Spirit is preached, and the fact that one knows its content in the head are not enough. One must believe with the heart.

To believe with the heart is to receive the Lord's work of salvation as one's own salvation. It is to believe the fact that when Jesus received baptism from John, all the sins of my whole life were also passed onto Him, that because of those sins the Lord was judged on the Cross, and that He rose again

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and saved me forever. The person who believes like this, apart from the fact that his deeds are lacking, becomes a righteous person without sin in his heart because of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

On the last day the Lord divides the righteous and the wicked. That distinction is made not by man but by God. Therefore the person who preaches the gospel must deliver the word of life exactly, rather than hastily condemning others. He must entrust the final judgment to the Lord, and serve so that even one more person may hear the true gospel and receive the remission of sin.

7. The scribe who brings out things new and old is the one who knows the gospel of both the Old and New Testaments (verses 51–52)

Jesus said that every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old. Seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we can apply this to mean that the old things include the shadow of salvation revealed in the sacrificial system and the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the new things include the fact that it has been fulfilled in Jesus.

In the Old Testament the sinner passed his sins by laying his hands on the head of an unblemished sacrificial offering. The offering onto which the sins were passed shed its blood and died, receiving the sinner's penalty in his place. This showed beforehand the saving work of Jesus Christ who was to come.

In the New Testament Jesus came as the unblemished Lamb of God. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, the sins of all people

were passed onto His own body. Bearing those sins, He died on the Cross, shedding His blood. And He rose again from the dead. The laying on of hands and the sacrifice of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus' baptism and the Cross.

Therefore the person entrusted with the word of the kingdom of heaven must not explain the Cross separated off by itself, but must deliver the whole process of salvation that God promised from the Old Testament and completed in Jesus.

8. The unbelief of the people of Jesus' hometown shows the danger of knowing Jesus only in a fleshly way (verses 53–58)

The people of Jesus' hometown, though seeing His wisdom and mighty works, thought of Him only as the carpenter's son. On the grounds that they knew Mary and Jesus' brothers and sisters, they did not receive Jesus as the Savior sent by God. They knew Jesus' human background, but they did not know who He was.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is also hard to receive if one looks at it only with fleshly thoughts. If one sees Jesus' baptism as only an ordinary ceremony of water, or sees the Cross as only the tragic death of one righteous man, one cannot discover the salvation of God contained in them.

Jesus is not a mere carpenter's son. He is the Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the body of a man. That He, who has no sin, received baptism from John was not because of His own sin but in order to have our sins passed onto Him. The Lord carried those sins and was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us.

The problem of the people of His hometown lay not in that they knew Jesus too much, but in that, shut up in fleshly knowledge, they did not believe in the true Jesus. Today as well, the mere fact that one has long known the name of Jesus

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and the Cross is not enough. One must know and believe with the heart how Jesus removed my sins with the water and the Spirit.

The core of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Matthew chapter 13 conveys

Matthew chapter 13 proclaims that the seed of life, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is being sown in the whole world. Even hearing the same gospel, the person whose heart is hardened does not understand it, the person without root casts it away before hardship, and the person caught by the cares of the world and greed bears no fruit. But the person who lays down his own thoughts and receives the word of God just as it is receives the remission of all sins through Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

To that person the gospel of the water and the Spirit raises up life like a mustard seed and changes the whole heart like leaven, and it becomes the most precious thing that cannot be exchanged for anything in the world, like the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great price. He believes in the righteousness of God and becomes a person without sin in his heart, and gives thanks for the salvation he has received and bears the fruit of preaching the gospel of life to others.

Now in the world the true gospel and false teachings exist together, and those who have heard the gospel and those who have believed it seem mixed together. But on the last day the Lord clearly divides the wheat and the tares, the good fish and the bad. Therefore, a person must not remain merely in an outward religious life, but must believe in their heart that Jesus had all their sins passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John and completely saved them through His death on the Cross and His resurrection.

To sum it up in one sentence, Matthew chapter 13 teaches that the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, is being sown in the whole world as the life seed of the kingdom of heaven, and that the person who understands that word and believes it with the heart bears the fruit of the remission of sin and enters the kingdom of God, but the person who rejects it to the end receives the last judgment. ✉

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Matthew Chapter 13

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven is opened to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Introduction

Matthew chapter 13 is the word in which Jesus taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through many parables to the great multitudes gathered by the sea. The parable of the sower, the parable of the wheat and the tares, the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, the parables of the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great price, and the parable of the dragnet follow one after another. When the disciples asked why He spoke in parables, Jesus answered that there are those to whom it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and those to whom it has not been given. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are not understood by human wisdom; they are opened to the person who lowers his heart and receives the word.

In the parable of the sower, the seed is the word of the kingdom and the field is a person's heart. Though the same seed of life is sown, it bears no fruit by the wayside, on the stony places, and among the thorns, and only in the good ground that hears the word and understands it does it bear fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. The problem lies not in

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the seed but in the state of the heart that receives the word. The person who lays down his own thoughts, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and receives the gospel deep into his heart, is the good ground.

The parable of the wheat and the tares and the parable of the dragnet show that in the present world the true gospel and false teachings, those who are truly born again and those who are not, are mixed together. The owner commanded to leave the tares until the harvest, but at the end of the age the wheat and the tares are clearly divided: the wheat enters the barn and the tares are thrown into the fire. Though it is hard to distinguish them by outward appearance, God knows the righteous born of true faith and those who are not, and He reveals this completely at the last judgment.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven show the power of life the gospel has. The mustard seed is smaller than all the seeds but grows and becomes a tree, and the leaven enters three measures of meal and leavens it all. The gospel of the water and the Spirit also looks small and insignificant at first, but it changes the whole heart of the person who believes and spreads out into all the world. And the parables of the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great price show the value of this gospel. The person who has discovered its value keeps this gospel in his heart even by selling all that he has—that is, even by laying down all his own righteousness and merit.

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is the word of salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus had all his sins passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John, received all the judgment by carrying those sins and dying on the Cross shedding His blood, and overcame the power of sin and death by rising from

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the dead. As the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven brings out of his treasure things new and old, the person who has understood together the promise of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of the New Testament both believes this gospel himself and delivers it to others. But as the people of His hometown rejected Jesus, regarding Him only as the carpenter's son, the person who knows Jesus only in a fleshly way cannot obtain the power of salvation that is in Him.

The seed of life, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is being sown in the whole world even now, and the person who understands and believes that word with the heart surely bears the fruit of the kingdom of heaven. Now, examining the words of the passage in order, let us look into what the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven Jesus taught in parables are, and what kind of heart becomes the good ground and bears the fruit of salvation.

The one who hears the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and understands and believes it with the heart becomes the good ground and bears fruit

"On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: 'Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were

scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (Matthew 13:1–9).

Jesus got into a boat and sat down in order to speak to the great multitudes gathered by the sea. And through the figure of a farmer sowing seed, He explained the hearts of those who hear the word of the kingdom of God. A parable is a word that teaches the spiritual truth of heaven through familiar things that can be seen on earth.

The sower fundamentally refers to Jesus, who delivers the word of God. The servants of God and the believers who preach the gospel they have received from Jesus also take part in the work of sowing the seed. The seed refers to the word of the kingdom, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit that has sinners receive the remission of sin and enter the kingdom of God.

The seeds the farmer sowed were all good seeds with the same life. But the results differed according to the state of the field where the seed fell. This is not because there is some problem with the gospel so that some are saved and some are not; it is because the states of the hearts that hear the word differ from one another. Even hearing the same gospel of the water and the Spirit, the person who receives it with the heart and the person who pushes it out with his own thoughts come to different results.

The seed that fell by the wayside could not enter the soil and lay on the surface as it was. A path is trodden by many people and so is hardened solid. Like this, the word of the gospel cannot enter deep into a heart hardened by its own thoughts and religious preconceptions. If one hears the gospel

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and regards it as no more than a piece of religious knowledge or an interesting story, the word cannot take root in the heart.

That the birds came and devoured the seed by the wayside means that when a person hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the wicked one snatches that word away. Satan puts in thoughts like ‘How can a person be without sin?’ and ‘Even if you believe in Jesus, are you not a sinner every day?’, and keeps one from believing the word of the remission of sin sown in the heart. If one knows the word only in the head and does not believe it with the heart, the gospel cannot become that person’s salvation.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word that Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the flesh, took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Jesus carried those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving all the penalty of sin, and rose from the dead, completing the salvation of those who believe. One must not stop at merely knowing this word as knowledge, but must believe with the heart the fact that his sins were actually passed onto Jesus.

The seed that fell on the stony places with shallow soil immediately sprang up but could not put down deep roots. When the sun rose, it withered for lack of moisture. This shows the state of a person who hears the gospel and rejoices for a moment, but in whom the word has not taken deep root in the heart. He gladly receives the word that his sins have disappeared, but he has not deeply realized what kind of sinner he originally was and how Jesus removed all his sins.

Such a person can easily be shaken when he meets slander or hardship because of the gospel. Also, when his own evil and shortcomings are exposed in the life of faith, he doubts the gospel, thinking, ‘I am this evil—how can I be called

righteous?' But when one's own evil is exposed, one should not think that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is wrong, but should admit, just as God's word says, that he is a weak human being born with the nature of sin.

The more one's shortcomings are exposed, the more firmly one must hold on to the fact that the Lord took on even all the sins of such a person with the baptism He received from John. Those whom Jesus saved are not people who are perfect in the flesh but sinners who cannot solve their sin with their own strength. The person who has put down deep roots in the word does not look at his own deeds but looks at the righteousness of Jesus who removed all sins.

The seed that fell among the thorns sprang up and began to grow, but the thorns grew up together and choked it. The thorns represent the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires of the flesh. Even when a person hears the word, his heart can be taken captive by the cares and desires of what to eat and drink and how to gain more riches. If the things of the world fill the heart, the word of the gospel cannot lead one's life and bears no fruit.

This does not mean that riches or an occupation are themselves thorns. The saved person also must work, care for his family, and prepare what is needed for life. The problem is that riches and success become the master of the heart and push out the word of God. If one says he knows the gospel and yet follows only his own gain and worldly desires, the power of the word is choked and it is hard to bear the fruit of bringing other souls to life and serving God.

The good ground refers to the person who hears the word, understands it, and receives it with the heart. The good ground is not a person whose character is good from the beginning and who has sinned little. It is the person who lays down his own

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thoughts before the word of God and admits that he is a being born with the nature of sin who cannot but sin all his life. And it is the person who receives just as it is the word that Jesus has completely saved such a self.

The heart of the good ground believes that Jesus had all of its sins—past, present, and future—passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and made it righteous through His resurrection. Such faith puts its roots not in human feelings or circumstances but in the written word of God. So even when one's shortcomings are exposed or hardship comes, one does not cast away the word of salvation.

That the good ground bore fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold means that the measure of fruit can differ from person to person. Not everyone has to do the same work with the same gifts and abilities. But in the person who has truly understood and believed the gospel, the fruit of faith surely appears: the fruit of confessing the salvation Jesus accomplished, preaching the gospel to others, loving the brothers and sisters, and serving the righteousness of God with one's life.

This fruit does not mean only material success or worldly prosperity. The most important fruit is that one soul hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sin. When a person who believes the gospel delivers the word to yet another person, and that person is saved and preaches the gospel again, the spiritual fruit of thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold is borne. It is the Holy Spirit working through that person's heart and life.

The words *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* do not mean only that everyone who has fleshly ears should hear the sound. They mean to have the spiritual ears that lay down one's

own thoughts and seek to understand and believe the word of God. Hearing the word many times is not enough. One must understand what that word says about one's sin, judgment, and salvation, and receive it with the heart.

Therefore we must examine what kind of field our heart is now. If there are hardened thoughts, we must lay them down before the word; if there is self-righteousness like stones, we must admit it before God and cast it away; and we must keep the thorns of the cares and desires of the world from choking the word. We must engrave deep in our hearts and keep holding on to the word that Jesus removed all our sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. The heart that understands, believes, and keeps this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the good ground, and through such a person God bears the abundant fruit of salvation.

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven is opened to the person who lowers his heart before the word of God and understands and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit

"And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not

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understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. 'Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.'" (Matthew 13:10–23).

The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the people in parables instead of explaining directly. Jesus answered that to the disciples it had been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the people whose hearts were hardened it had not been given. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are not knowledge discovered by the wisdom or philosophy of the world, but the truth of salvation that can be known only when God reveals it through the word.

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven is opened to those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Jesus' parables light up the kingdom of God for the person who seeks the truth, but to the person who stubbornly holds to his own thoughts they sound like mere stories. The disciples also did not understand all the parables from the beginning. But when they did not understand, they came to Jesus and asked its meaning. The Pharisees, on the other hand, heard the same words yet did not try to learn but tested and opposed Jesus. Like this, in understanding the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the heart with which one faces the word matters.

In the words *"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance,"* what one has does not speak of the riches or knowledge of the world. It means the heart that fears God and seeks to believe His word, and the faith that holds on to the truth already received. To the person who regards the word as precious and receives it, God gives deeper understanding and faith. He obtains not only the remission of sin but also the strength to live in the gospel and the wisdom to serve others.

Conversely, the words *"but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him"* mean that if a person hears the truth and does not regard it as precious, even the knowledge he had comes to give no benefit at all to his salvation. If one does not believe the gospel with the heart but only remembers it as a doctrine, as time passes the thoughts of the world and false teachings snatch that word away. The word of salvation becomes life that brings the soul to life only when one receives and believes it with the heart.

Jesus, quoting the prophecy of Isaiah, said that the hearts of the people had grown hardened. The reason they saw and yet did not see, and heard and yet did not understand, was not that the evidence was insufficient. They regarded their own thoughts and religious righteousness as more right than the

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word of God. Because acknowledging Jesus as the Savior meant laying down what they had believed to be their own righteousness, they closed their own eyes and stopped their own ears.

It is not that God hides the truth without any reason because He does not want people to be saved. God wants all people to hear the truth and be saved. But the person who holds to his own righteousness and keeps refusing the word grows hardened in heart of his own accord, and in the end, even when he hears, he cannot understand. As the result of repeatedly refusing the truth, the word of God becomes to that person not salvation but the evidence of judgment.

The words *"Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them"* show how true repentance and salvation come about. First one must hear the word of God, and understand that word with the heart. Then, when one turns from his own thoughts and righteousness and believes the salvation God has accomplished, the soul sick with sin is healed. Simply piling up much Bible knowledge and understanding and believing the gospel with the heart are different things.

That the disciples' eyes and ears were called blessed is because they directly saw Jesus Christ, whom the prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament had longed to see and hear, and heard His word. The sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament showed beforehand the Messiah who was to come and His salvation. Now Jesus, the Owner of that promise, had come and was Himself revealing the mystery of the kingdom of God that saves sinners.

Today we do not see Jesus directly with the eyes of the flesh, but through the written word we can see and hear the

salvation He accomplished. The eyes and ears of the person who understands and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit that the Scriptures testify to are also blessed. For through the word he can know clearly how his sins were passed onto Jesus and how those sins were judged.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word that Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the body of a man, took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Jesus carried those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving all the penalty of sin, and rose from the dead, giving eternal remission of sin and new life to those who believe. This is the mystery of the kingdom of heaven God has revealed through the word.

Jesus went on to explain directly the parable of the four kinds of ground. The seed is the word of the kingdom, and the field is the heart of the person who hears the word. Though the same gospel is delivered, entirely different results appear according to the state of the heart that hears and understands the word.

The seed sown by the wayside refers to the person who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it. The wayside is ground trodden by people and hardened solid. Like this, a heart hardened by its own thoughts and religious preconceptions does not receive the word even when it hears it. If, on hearing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one believes more in his own thought, “How can a person be without sin?”, the wicked one snatches away the word sown in that heart.

To understand is not merely to memorize the fact that Jesus received baptism. It is to receive as one’s own salvation the fact that the baptism He received from John was for all my sins

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to be passed onto Him, and that because of those sins He was judged on the Cross. If one does not believe with the heart that this word applies to himself, however exact the gospel he hears, the work of life does not arise, like the seed lying by the wayside.

The seed sown on the stony places refers to the person who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy but has no root within. He rejoices at the word that his sins have disappeared, but he has not deeply realized what kind of sinner he originally was and why Jesus had to bear both the baptism and the Cross. So when he suffers tribulation or slander because of the gospel, or when the evil of his own flesh is exposed, he stumbles, following circumstances and feelings rather than the word.

To put down roots in the word is to hold on to God's promise without looking at one's own deeds. Even when one's shortcomings are exposed in the life of faith, one must admit before the word, "Jesus took on even all these sins of mine." One's own weakness is not evidence that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is wrong; it shows why one needs the perfect Savior.

The seed sown among the thorns refers to the person who heard the word but in whom the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choked the word. This does not mean that the matter of making a living and riches themselves are sin. But when the success of the world and the desires of the flesh rule the heart, the space to hear the word of God disappears. If one says he knows the gospel and yet chases only his own gain, the word bears no fruit.

The good ground is the person who hears the word and understands it. The good ground does not mean a person of originally good character who has sinned little. It is the person

who admits before the word of God that he is a being with the nature of sin who cannot escape sin and judgment by his own strength. And it is the person who exalts above his own thoughts and receives with the heart the gospel that Jesus has completely saved him.

The person of the good ground believes the word that Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of his whole life through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and made him righteous by rising again. Even when his feelings change or circumstances grow hard, he sets the standard of salvation not on his own deeds but on the written word. So he does not lose the gospel but keeps putting down the roots of faith.

The fruit of a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold shows that the measure of fruit can differ because each person's gifts and appointed work differ. But in the person who has truly understood and believed the word, the fruit of the gospel surely appears. He confesses the salvation of Jesus with his mouth, preaches the gospel to other souls, loves the brothers and sisters, and serves the righteousness of God with his life and talents.

Therefore the most important attitude for knowing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is to lower one's heart before the word of God. Instead of judging or pushing out with one's own thoughts the word one does not understand, one must, like the disciples, seek its meaning from the Lord and hear and confirm the word again. When one understands and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, and keeps the cares of the world and self-righteousness from choking the word, that heart becomes the good ground. Through such a person God bears the abundant fruit of salvation in which other souls receive the remission of sin.

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The wheat born of the true gospel of the water and the Spirit enters God's barn, but the tares born of a false gospel receive judgment

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn"'" (Matthew 13:24–30).

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a man who sowed good seed in his field. This parable shows how God gives the word of salvation to the world and gains the people of the kingdom of God through that word. The owner of the field is Jesus Christ, the field is the world, and the good seeds represent the children of the kingdom of God born by receiving the true word of God.

In good seed there is originally good life. As wheat grows when a farmer sows wheat seed, so when the true gospel God has given is planted in a person's heart and believed, that person receives the remission of sin and is born again as a child of God. It is not a person's religious effort or good deeds that make him wheat; what word he has received into his heart and believed determines his spiritual life.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the good seed God has sown in the world. Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the flesh, took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And carrying the sin of the world, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving all the penalty of sin, and rose from the dead, completing the salvation of those who believe.

Jesus, through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, has given the seed of life that can save every sinner. When a person believes this word with the heart, he realizes the fact that all his sins were passed onto Jesus and receives the remission of sin. And God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift into that person's heart and seals him as His own child. The person born again like this through the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the wheat the parable speaks of.

But while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. The enemy is Satan, and the tares he sowed represent false teachings that resemble the word of God but cannot lead a person to the true remission of sin. Those who believe that false seed and think themselves the people of God while keeping sin as it is in their hearts also correspond to the tares.

In the early stage of growth, tares look very similar to wheat and are hard to distinguish. Likewise, a false gospel also speaks of Jesus, the Cross, and the resurrection, and so at first hearing it can look similar to the true gospel. But if it cannot clearly testify when and by what method sin was passed onto Jesus, and teaches that a person must keep washing his sins with repeated prayers of repentance or his own good deeds, it is a different seed from the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The blood of the Cross is the truth of salvation that must

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surely be believed. But it was because Jesus first took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John that He could receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross. If one believes only in the Cross, leaving out the word of the baptism by which sin was passed onto Jesus, one cannot believe with the heart how his own sins were transferred to Jesus. As a result, even while believing in Jesus, sin still remains in his heart.

The servants of the owner were surprised to see tares growing in the field where good seed had been sown. They asked the owner, *"How then does it have tares?"* The owner did not say there was a problem with the good seed, but answered, *"An enemy has done this."* The gospel God has given is perfect, but Satan has mixed in lies similar to that gospel and hindered people from receiving the true remission of sin.

Satan does not work only by the method of denying the gospel entirely. He also deceives by presenting content very similar to the true gospel while leaving out the most important truth or adding human works. Even while saying that Jesus is the Son of God and died on the Cross, if one takes out the word that He took on all the sins of the world once and for all with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the order of the gospel is blurred. Therefore we must discern the seed by the written word, not by human tradition or doctrine.

The servants said they would go and gather up the tares at once, but the owner said, *"No."* This does not mean that one should not discern or rebuke false teaching. The believer must discern the true gospel and the false gospel by the word, and must clearly preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But man must not judge by his own feelings and condemn who is finally wheat and who is a tare, nor try to remove them by

violence and force.

In the words that in gathering up the tares they might uproot the wheat as well is contained the owner's heart that protects the wheat. People can judge wrongly, seeing only the outward appearance, and even a person who does not yet know the gospel exactly can afterward hear the word and believe and be saved. Therefore, rather than fixing a person beforehand as one to perish, we must keep delivering the word of the water and the Spirit so that he may hear and believe the true gospel.

The words *"Let both grow together until the harvest"* mean that in this world true faith and false faith exist together until the last. Being gathered under the name of a church does not automatically make everyone wheat. Even if people read the same Bible, sing the same hymns, and lead outwardly similar religious lives, the result differs according to what seed of the gospel each heart has received.

The difference between the wheat and the tares appears at last in the fruit. The wheat believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, obtains the remission of sin and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and confesses by faith that Jesus has removed all its sins. And it bears the fruit of preaching this gospel to others and serving the righteousness of God. The tares, on the other hand, look similar to wheat in outward appearance, but sin remains in the heart and they come to rely on human righteousness and religious works.

The time of harvest refers to God's last judgment at the end of the age. The reapers represent the angels who carry out God's command. At that time God will distinguish the wheat and the tares exactly. The tares are bound to be burned, and the wheat is gathered into the owner's barn. This means that for the person who has not received the remission of sin there is eternal judgment, and for the people of God born again through

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the gospel of the water and the Spirit the eternal kingdom of God is prepared.

When we hear this word, rather than first judging others to be tares, we must examine what seed is planted in our own hearts. We must confirm whether I believe that even while believing in Jesus I still have sin in my heart, or believe that Jesus completely saved me by taking on all sins and being judged. Denomination, office, and religious career do not guarantee that one is wheat. Only whether one has been born again by believing the true gospel with the heart matters.

Therefore we must clearly know and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit just as the written word says. We must receive with the heart the fact that Jesus took on all my sins with the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and made me righteous by rising again. And entrusting the final judgment to God, we must diligently deliver the good seed of life to those who do not yet know the gospel. This is the faith and the life of the wheat that will enter God's barn at the time of harvest.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit, like a small mustard seed, establishes the kingdom of God in a person's heart and spreads out into all the world

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.' Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of

meal till it was all leavened'" (Matthew 13:31–33).

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed and to leaven. Like a mustard seed, the kingdom of God looks very small and insignificant at first, but by the power of life it grows greatly. Like leaven, the gospel enters a person's heart in a way hardly visible to the eye and finally changes the whole person and spreads far and wide.

A mustard seed is at first so small that it hardly catches the eye. But when it is planted in the ground, by the life within it, it sprouts and grows into a great plant. The gospel of the water and the Spirit may also look like a very simple and small word when one first hears it. The word that Jesus received baptism to take on the sin of the world and was judged on the Cross may look smaller and plainer than the philosophies of the world or splendid religious teachings.

But in that gospel is the life that makes a sinner righteous and has him born again as a child of God. A person's devotion, good deeds, and religious training cannot remove the sin of the heart, but the word of salvation God has accomplished washes away all the sins of the person who believes and gives eternal life. As the power of a mustard seed lies not in the size of its outward appearance but in the life within it, so the power of the gospel lies not in the splendor of words but in the salvation God has actually accomplished.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word that Jesus, the Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the flesh, took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Jesus, as the Lamb of God carrying the sin of the world, died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving all the penalty of sin, and rose from the dead, completing the eternal salvation of those who believe.

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When a person believes this gospel with the heart, the kingdom of God begins within him. When he believes the fact that his sins were passed onto Jesus and that even the judgment of those sins is finished, he receives the remission of sin, and God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift into his heart. The person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells becomes one of the people of the kingdom of God who serves God as King and lives following His word.

Through one person who has believed the gospel, many other souls obtain help and rest. This is the figure of the mustard seed growing into a tree and the birds of the air nesting in its branches. At first one person hears the gospel and receives the remission of sin, but when that person delivers the word of salvation to another, more people escape from sin and condemnation and become the people of the kingdom of God. When the faith of those born again through the gospel grows, they can embrace the souls suffering under the power of sin and Satan and deliver to them the way of salvation.

But this does not mean that a person becomes another person's savior. As the branches of a tree provide rest to the birds, the believer and the church serve the role of preaching the gospel, protecting, and serving so that people may meet Jesus Christ. The One who actually washes away sin and gives eternal rest is Jesus alone. The believer must not bind people to himself but must lead them to Jesus through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The spread of the gospel that began with Jesus and a few disciples looked very small in the eyes of the world of that day. Jesus did not organize the armies of the world or political power. But as the disciples began to preach the gospel, not only Jews but also Gentiles came to believe in Jesus, and the kingdom of God spread beyond peoples and borders. The

gospel that was like a single small mustard seed grew into a great tree embracing many souls.

The parable of the leaven also shows this same power of the gospel. When a woman put a little leaven into three measures of meal, the leaven worked where it could not be seen and leavened the whole lump. The gospel too, when it enters a person's heart, may show no great change at first. But when that person believes with the heart the baptism the Lord received from John and the blood of the Cross, his thinking about sin and his attitude toward God change fundamentally.

In other contexts of the Bible, leaven also represents sin and false teaching. But in this passage Jesus is comparing the kingdom of heaven to leaven, and so it shows the expanding power of the kingdom of God, the little word of the gospel spreading from within to the whole. A symbol used in a parable is not always to be interpreted in only one meaning; it must be understood following the context in which Jesus spoke.

As leaven does not change only the outside of the dough but spreads inward and affects the whole, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a word that changes only a person's outward appearance religiously. It first washes all the sins of the heart and changes his relationship with God. The sinner becomes righteous, the servant of Satan becomes a child of God, and the person who feared judgment comes to hope for eternal life.

Even after being born again through the gospel, the character and life of the flesh do not become perfect in a moment. But as the word of the gospel planted in the heart keeps working, that person learns to believe and follow the word of God rather than his own thoughts. The person who used to seek only his own gain comes to think of the salvation of other souls, and to use his talents, possessions, and time in

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serving the gospel. This is the figure of the life of the gospel spreading out into one's life.

As leaven spreads through the whole meal, the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not stay only in a particular people or region. God causes this gospel to be delivered to the whole world so that all peoples may receive the remission of sin. The expansion of the gospel is accomplished not by forcing people into submission or by the power of the world, but in the way that souls arise who hear the word of salvation and believe it with the heart.

We must not judge that the mustard seed has become a great tree merely because church buildings grow larger and the number of church members increases. The true growth of the kingdom of God is the increase of people whose hearts have been washed of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. However great a religious organization may be, if sin remains as it is in people's hearts, it cannot be called the kingdom of God grown by the life of the gospel.

Therefore we must not regard the work of preaching the gospel lightly because the beginning is small and the result is not immediately visible. When the word of salvation delivered to one person is planted in his heart and accomplishes the remission of sin, and that person in turn preaches the gospel to another, the kingdom of God keeps expanding. The word of salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection surely brings the believing soul to life and bears abundant fruit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit looks like a small mustard seed, but it is the power of life that makes sinners into children of God; it begins like a little leaven, but it is the power of the kingdom of God that spreads through a person's heart and the whole world. We must firmly believe this gospel in our

hearts and keep delivering it to those still under sin and condemnation. Through that small seed of faith and the preaching of the gospel, God causes many souls to obtain true rest and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven kept secret from the foundation of the world begets the righteous through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and is fully revealed at the last judgment

"All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.' Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:34–43).

Jesus spoke the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to the

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multitude in parables. This was to fulfill the prophecy, *"I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world."* That things were kept secret from the foundation of the world does not mean that God hid the truth forever so that no one could be saved. It means that God plainly reveals, when the time comes, the salvation He planned in Jesus Christ from before the foundation of the world.

In the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, the Tabernacle, and the prophecies of the prophets, the salvation of Jesus Christ who was to come was contained like a shadow. The sacrifice in which the sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed his sins, and the offering shed its blood and died, paying the price of sin, also showed beforehand the work of Jesus. But before Jesus actually came to this earth and accomplished salvation, its meaning was not fully revealed.

When Jesus left the multitude and went into the house, the disciples came and asked Him to explain the meaning of the parable of the tares. The disciples also did not understand all the parables from the beginning. But they did not interpret the word they did not understand according to their own thoughts, but asked Jesus. To understand the word of God, one needs like this the heart that lays down its own thoughts and seeks its meaning from the Lord who spoke it.

Jesus explained the elements of the parable directly. He who sows the good seed is Jesus, the Son of Man; the field is the world; and the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom. It means that Jesus delivers the word of life to the world and saves from sin those who believe that word, establishing them in the world as children of the kingdom of God.

The word that the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom does not mean that a person becomes one of the people of the

kingdom of God because he is good from the beginning. All people are born descendants of Adam and live with the nature of sin. But when one hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished and believes it with the heart, he receives the remission of sin and is born anew as a child of God. The person who has received the true life of the gospel becomes the good seed.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the word that Jesus, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came in the flesh, took on all the sins of mankind onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Jesus carried those sins and died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving all the penalty of sin, and rose from the dead, completing the eternal salvation of those who believe.

When one believes this word of salvation with the heart, he comes to realize the fact that his sins were actually passed onto Jesus and that the judgment was finished on the Cross. God washes the heart of that believing person from sin and gives him the Holy Spirit as a gift. The person who has received the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit like this is a son of the kingdom, the good seed Jesus sows in the field of the world.

On the other hand, the tares are the sons of the wicked one, and the enemy who sowed the tares is the devil. The tares do not mean only those who do conspicuously evil deeds in the world. Even if one outwardly believes in Jesus and leads a religious life, if in his heart he refuses God's salvation and keeps his sin as it is, following a false gospel, he is in the state of having been deceived by the wicked one.

Satan does not work only by the method of keeping people from believing in Jesus at all. He also deceives by making teachings similar to the word of God, taking out the most important truth of salvation or adding human works. If one

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emphasizes the Cross of Jesus while leaving out the fact that He first took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, or teaches that a person must keep washing his sins with repeated prayers of repentance and good deeds, one cannot obtain the complete remission of sin in the heart.

The true gospel does not say that Jesus took on only a part of sin. Jesus had all the sins of mankind—past, present, and future—transferred to Him once and for all through His baptism, and paid the price for all those sins on the Cross. Therefore the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, even though his flesh is weak, can believe that all his sins were washed away by the righteousness of Jesus and confess that he has become a righteous person without sin before God.

The words *"the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels"* mean that the history of the world does not continue forever. Now the good seeds and the tares are growing together in the same world, but when the appointed last time comes, Jesus will send the angels and distinguish them exactly. Man can judge wrongly, seeing only the outward appearance, but God knows what faith is in each person's heart.

The reapers are not the church leaders of this earth or a particular religious group but the actual angels God sends. Therefore the work entrusted to the believer is not to judge or remove people by force. We must discern the true gospel and the false gospel by the word and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but the authority to decide a person's eternal destiny and judge finally belongs to Jesus Christ.

"All things that offend" includes the lies and temptations that hinder people from believing God's salvation. *"Those who practice lawlessness"* are those who change the word of God to

fit their own thoughts and desires, refuse the righteousness God has accomplished, and cause even others to depart from the truth. This does not mean to condemn as tares everyone who has committed a single fleshly mistake. The fundamental problem is refusing God's salvation and remaining in unbelief.

The furnace of fire shows the severity of the last judgment. Jesus is the Savior of love, but at the same time He is the righteous Judge who judges sin and unbelief. If, though the Son of God has solved all sin with His own baptism and Cross, a person refuses that salvation to the end, there is no other savior to take on sin in his place. As a result he comes to receive himself the judgment for his own sin.

The words *"There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth"* mean that in the face of the judgment one regrets too late, but there is no opportunity to turn back again. While one is alive, anyone can hear the gospel, believe, and receive the remission of sin. But after the judgment of the end of the age begins, one cannot be saved by putting forward his religious zeal or works. Therefore one must hear and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit exactly, now.

The words *"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father"* are a glorious promise given to the saved believers. The righteous here is not a person whose deeds of the flesh are perfect and who has never once done wrong. He is a person who, by believing that Jesus had all his sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the Cross, has received the remission of sins through the righteousness of God.

In the world, the righteous who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit can look weak and insignificant. They may suffer slander or hardship while preaching the gospel. But in the kingdom of God they enjoy eternal life and glory as

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children of God and come to shine like the sun. In particular, God remembers forever the faith and labor of those who have helped other souls receive the remission of sin by preaching the gospel to them.

The words *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"* mean not to hear this word of judgment and salvation lightly. Before judging others to be tares, one must first confirm what gospel is planted in his own heart. One must examine whether he believes that even while believing in Jesus he still has sin in his heart, or believes that Jesus completely saved him by taking on all sins and being judged.

The mystery of the kingdom of heaven kept secret from the foundation of the world is the gospel of the water and the Spirit by which Jesus makes sinners righteous through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes this gospel with the heart becomes a son of the kingdom, is planted in the world as a seed of life, and lives preaching the gospel to other souls. And at the end of the age Jesus Christ receives him into the Father's kingdom and has him enjoy the eternal glory of shining like the sun.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the most precious treasure of the kingdom of heaven, to be kept in the heart even at the cost of laying down everything

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all

that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:44–46).

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to treasure hidden in a field and to a pearl of great price. What appears in common in the two parables is the incomparable value of the treasure and the resolve of the person who found it. Both the man who found the treasure in the field and the merchant seeking beautiful pearls sold all that they had. This means that to the person who has truly found the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, there is nothing more precious than that gospel.

God's plan of salvation is revealed in the word, but not all people realize it. The treasure hidden in the field teaches this fact. People can read the Bible and yet, because of their own thoughts and religious preconceptions, fail to see the righteousness of salvation Jesus accomplished. But the person who admits his sin and his helplessness and humbly hears the word of God comes to discover the treasure of the kingdom of heaven hidden in the word.

This treasure is Jesus Christ and the gospel of the water and the Spirit He completed. Jesus took on the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And carrying those sins, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead in three days. Through Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, the righteousness of God that makes sinners righteous was completed. This is the true treasure that brings one into the kingdom of heaven.

The man who found the treasure hid it again and went away rejoicing. This action does not mean to keep the gospel to oneself without delivering it to others. It means that he realized how precious that treasure was and held on to it surely so as not to be robbed of it by anyone. The person who has found the gospel of the water and the Spirit must also keep the gospel

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firmly in his heart so as not to lose it because of human claims or the temptations of the world.

The word that the man sold all that he had does not mean that one must sell his property to buy salvation. The kingdom of heaven cannot be bought with money, good deeds, sacrifice, or merit. All the price for salvation Jesus has already paid with His own body. Because Jesus had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and paid the price for those sins on the Cross, we receive the remission of sins by believing in the righteousness He accomplished.

Therefore, to sell all that one has means to lay down the false things one has been holding inside in order to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is not regarding one's own righteousness, religious merit, human tradition and wrong doctrine, and the honor and desires of the world as more precious than the gospel. To cast away one's own thought and accept the word when one's thought differs from the word of God—this is the attitude of faith that sells all its possessions.

The man who found the treasure did not sell everything by compulsion. He did so *"for joy."* For the joy of gaining the treasure he had found was far greater than the loss of what he had. It is the same with the person who believes the fact that all his sins have been washed away by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even when he meets hardship and reproach in the world, he is not robbed of the joy of having gained the kingdom of God and eternal life.

The merchant seeking beautiful pearls shows a person who earnestly seeks the truth. He had seen many pearls, but after he found one pearl of great price he laid down all the other pearls. Man has countless religions, philosophies, and teachings of salvation, but there is only one truth that completely washes away sin: the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus

Christ, the Son of God, completed by taking on all our sins and being judged.

The pearl of great price refers to Jesus Christ Himself and the perfect salvation He accomplished. One must not stop at believing only that Jesus shed His blood on the Cross. It was because He first had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist that the blood He shed on the Cross could become the price for our sins. Jesus' baptism, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are not events separated from one another but one complete gospel for saving sinners.

The man who happened upon the treasure in the field and the merchant who had been diligently seeking beautiful pearls met the truth in different ways. Some people hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit at a time they never expected and discover salvation, and some meet this gospel after long seeking true salvation. But though the process of discovery differs, the treasure they gain is the same: the remission of sin, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life obtained in Jesus.

This word teaches us not to turn the treasure of the kingdom of heaven into the material blessings of the world in our thinking. The true treasure is not wealth or success but being saved from all sins and living with God. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit becomes a righteous person without sin, becomes a child of God, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift in his heart, becoming one of the people of the kingdom of heaven.

Therefore we must not regard the gospel of the water and the Spirit as one among many teachings. We must believe as the most precious treasure the gospel that Jesus took on all our sins with the baptism He received from John, was judged on

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the Cross, and rose again. And we must not put our own righteousness and the greed of the world before the gospel, but keep this faith to the end and deliver it to other souls as well. To discover and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true blessing of the kingdom of heaven, gaining the treasure hidden in the field and the pearl of great price.

The net of the gospel gathers all kinds of people, but at the end of the age those who have truly become righteous and those who remain in sin are divided

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47–50).

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to a dragnet cast into the sea, gathering fish of every kind. A net does not sort the kinds of fish beforehand but gathers together the various fish in the sea. In the same way, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not delivered only to people of a particular nation or station but is spread to all people of the world. The rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, those who look good and those who look evil—all without distinction are called to hear the word of the gospel.

The sea brings to mind the world full of sin, and the net represents the spread of the gospel that calls and gathers the

people of the world before God. But not every fish that has come into the net is acknowledged as a good fish. The mere fact that one has heard the gospel or attends a church does not automatically bring everyone into the kingdom of heaven.

The good fish does not refer to a person who has a good character from the beginning and has sinned little. In the Bible, the righteous is not a person who has become righteous because his deeds are good, but a person who has received the remission of sin by believing with the heart the righteousness God has accomplished. Since all people live committing sin with the flesh, no one can become a good person before God by his own good deeds and merit alone.

To make sinners righteous, God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Jesus took on the sins of all the people of the world onto His own body with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And carrying those sins, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead in three days. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit accomplished through Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection is the righteous person God acknowledges.

On the other hand, the bad fish and the wicked do not mean people whose outward appearance is lacking or who have failed in the world. They mean those who do not receive the righteousness of God and still hold on to their own sin and their own righteousness. If, though hearing the gospel, one does not believe that Jesus' baptism was the event of taking on all his sins, or insists only on the blood of the Cross and does not accept how sin was passed onto Jesus, sin still remains in his heart.

To be inside the net means that one has had the opportunity to hear the gospel; it does not itself guarantee being born again.

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Some people hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet do not cast away their own thoughts and existing doctrines. With their lips they say they believe in Jesus, while in their hearts they still think themselves sinners, and they constantly rely on their own prayers and good deeds to receive the remission of sin. Such faith trusts human works more than the righteousness God has completed.

The standard that distinguishes the good fish and the bad is not the perfection of the flesh. Even the person born again by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit has shortcomings and weaknesses of the flesh. But while acknowledging his shortcomings, he believes the Word that says that Jesus had all his sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and fully paid the price for those sins on the Cross. Therefore he confesses that he has become a righteous person without sin on the basis not of his feelings or deeds but of the word of God.

The words *"separate the wicked from among the just"* mean that in this world the righteous and the wicked can be outwardly mixed together. Even in the same church, hearing the same word and doing the same religious activities, the faith of each heart can differ. Man cannot fully know another person's heart, but God knows exactly each person's center and faith.

Therefore this word is not a command for man to hastily judge and condemn others. The final separation is carried out not by man but by the angels who belong to God, according to God's command. The role of the person who preaches the gospel is not to pick out the fish himself but to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit clearly to all people. Who truly believes, God judges.

The time when the net is drawn up to the shore refers to the

end of the age. While the net lies in the sea there is opportunity to hear the gospel and believe, but after the net has come up on the shore there is no more opportunity to choose. This word is a solemn warning that one must solve the problem of his sin while he is alive. After death, or at the time of the last judgment, one cannot choose faith again.

As the words say that the wicked are cast into the furnace of fire and that there is wailing and gnashing of teeth there, God's judgment is real and fearful. God is love, but at the same time He is the righteous One who surely judges sin. We must not take the judgment of sin lightly or think of hell as a mere symbol. We must realize the fact that God sent His own Son to deliver us from such a fearful judgment.

Jesus received in our place the judgment of sin that we should have received. He had all our sins passed on to Him and then died on the Cross, shedding His blood. Therefore the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit is not judged again because of his sins. The ground of salvation lies not in how well a person has lived but in believing wholly the saving work in which Jesus took on sin and was judged.

This does not mean, however, that after receiving the remission of sin one may live following only the desires of his flesh. Good deeds do not pay the price of salvation, but the person born again knows the grace of the Lord who saved him and lives regarding the gospel as precious. Though lacking, he is led by the Holy Spirit and comes to have the heart to serve the gospel and deliver it to other souls. Such a life is not a condition of salvation but the fruit of faith that appears in the person saved by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Therefore we must not be satisfied with the mere fact that we have come into the net of the gospel. Rather than whether I attend church or how much religious work I have done, we

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must examine whether we believe with the heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit accomplished through Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes this gospel wholly becomes a righteous person God acknowledges and enters the kingdom of heaven, but the person who holds on to his own sin and his own righteousness to the end is revealed as wicked on the last day and receives judgment. Now is the very time of grace when we must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved from all sins.

A disciple of the kingdom of heaven must realize the word of salvation revealed in the Old and New Testaments and believe in Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior

"Jesus said to them, 'Have you understood all these things?' They said to Him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then He said to them, 'Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.' Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?' So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.' Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:51–58).

After teaching the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, from the parable of the sower to the treasure in the field, the pearl of great price, and the parable of the dragnet, Jesus asked the disciples, *"Have you understood all these things?"* The disciples answered, *"Yes, Lord."* The word of God must not stop at being heard with the ears; one must understand its meaning and receive it with the heart.

To understand here does not mean only that one has grasped the content of the parables as knowledge. It is to receive with the heart the fact that one is a being who will perish because of sin, and the fact that the salvation God has accomplished in Jesus Christ is the most precious treasure of the kingdom of heaven. True understanding leads one to believe the word of God, and to live following the word one has believed.

Jesus compared the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven to a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old. The scribes of that day were those who studied and taught the word of God. But the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus spoke of is not merely a person with much Bible knowledge, but a person who realizes and teaches how the words of the Old and New Testaments have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The old things bring to mind God's covenant, the Law, and the law of sacrifice recorded in the Old Testament, and the new things refer to the gospel of the New Testament in which that promise was fulfilled through Jesus Christ. The old and the new are not two different methods of salvation in conflict with each other. The Old Testament shows beforehand Jesus who was to come and the salvation He would accomplish, and the New Testament testifies to the fact that Jesus actually fulfilled that promise.

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In the sacrifice of the Old Testament, the sinner laid his hands on the head of an unblemished sacrificial offering and passed his sins, and then made that offering shed its blood. The high priest, on the Day of Atonement, passed a year's sins of the people of Israel onto the sacrificial offering. This was the shadow showing beforehand that the Son of God would become the sinless sacrificial offering and take on all the sins of mankind.

In the New Testament, Jesus had all the sins of mankind passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And carrying the sin of the world, He died on the Cross shedding His blood, receiving the judgment of sin, and rose again in three days. The laying on of hands and the sacrifice of the Old Testament were completely fulfilled through Jesus' baptism and the Cross. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that must be explained bringing out the old and the new together.

Therefore a disciple of the kingdom of heaven must not deliver the blood of the Cross separated off by itself. He must explain, connecting the words of the Old and New Testaments, why Jesus had to shed His blood on the Cross, and when and by what method our sins were passed onto Him. It was because Jesus took on the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John that the death He received on the Cross could become the judgment for our sins.

The treasure store brings to mind the heart that has believed and kept the word of God. As a householder brings out various provisions from his storehouse according to the need, the person who has realized the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be able to use the words of the Old and New Testaments fittingly to explain salvation to other souls. For this, he must first believe the gospel clearly himself, and keep learning the

word of the Scriptures and keeping it in his heart.

To preach the gospel is not merely to tell a person "Believe in Jesus" and have him change his religion. It is to explain with the word who Jesus is and how He took on and removed our sins. We must deliver the gospel concretely so that the hearer may realize his own sin and believe Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection and receive the remission of sin.

After finishing the parables, Jesus returned to His own country and taught the word in the synagogue. The people of His hometown were astonished at Jesus' wisdom and mighty works, but they did not believe in Him. Hearing amazing words and seeing miracles is different from believing in Jesus as the Savior. If one marvels before the word of God and yet does not cast away his own thoughts, he cannot reach true faith.

The people of His hometown looked at Jesus only as *"the carpenter's son."* Because they knew Jesus' mother and brothers and sisters, they judged Him to be an ordinary person no different from themselves. It is true that Jesus put on an actual human body and lived among His family, but that is not all He is. Jesus is the Son of God who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and came as a man, and He is God who created the heavens and the earth.

Because of the fleshly background of Jesus they knew, they could not receive His divinity and His word. Familiarity rather hindered faith. Today too, people can think of Jesus only as a historical figure or a great moral teacher. Or, because of the familiarity of having long attended church, one can mistakenly think he already knows all about Jesus. But if one does not know Jesus' work of salvation, he does not truly know Him.

Their question, *"Where then did this Man get all these things?"* was not a humble question for finding the truth. It was a word that came out of the unbelief that such wisdom and

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power could not be in the carpenter's son they had known. In the end they put their own judgment before the word of God and rejected Jesus.

Jesus said, *"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."* Those close to a person, on the grounds that they know his past and his fleshly appearance well, can regard lightly even the word God delivers through him. The person who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit can also be rejected by his family or those close to him. But he must regard the word of God as more precious than people's recognition, and deliver the gospel with wisdom and love.

That Jesus did not do many mighty works in His hometown was not because His power was lacking. It was because they did not believe in Him and rejected Him. Faith is not a human power that produces God's power, but it is like the hand of the heart that receives the grace God has bestowed. However perfect the salvation prepared, if a person insists on his own thoughts and refuses the gospel, he cannot enjoy the grace of that salvation.

Therefore we must not judge Jesus by fleshly standards like the people of His hometown. We must see through the word of God who Jesus is and how He saved us. Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior who removed all our sins with the water and the Spirit. The person who believes what He accomplished just as the word says is the person who has found the treasure of the kingdom of heaven.

The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven does not stop at keeping that treasure alone. He must explain the promise of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of the New Testament clearly, as if bringing them out of a storehouse, and

help others also receive the remission of sin. Not judging Jesus only in a fleshly way, but believing and preaching His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection as God's perfect salvation—this is the mission of the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Matthew Chapter 13

[Question] 1. Explain the content and the characteristics of the parables of the kingdom of heaven recorded in Matthew chapter 13.

Matthew chapter 13 is the chapter in which Jesus taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven through many parables, and it is often called the chapter of the parables of the kingdom of heaven.

Through the parables of the sower, the tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the hidden treasure, the pearl, and the dragnet, Jesus taught the following.

The different states of heart of those who receive the gospel of the kingdom, the growth and expansion of the kingdom of God, the value of the kingdom of heaven, and the separation and judgment of the righteous and the wicked at the end of the age. It is also an important characteristic of this chapter that He spoke to the multitude in parables and explained their meaning separately to the disciples. Even when people hear the same word, to the person who receives it by faith the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed, but to the person whose heart is stubborn their meaning is hidden.

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[Question] 2. Matthew 13:1–2—where and through what parable did Jesus speak of the kingdom of heaven to the multitude?

Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. When great multitudes gathered, Jesus got into a boat and sat, and the multitude stood on the shore and listened to the word.

"On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore" (Matthew 13:1–2).

Jesus used the boat like a pulpit and taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in many parables to the multitude gathered on the shore. The first of these was the parable of the sower.

In the parable of the sower, the seed means the word of the kingdom, that is, the word of God, and the wayside, the stony places, the thorns, and the good ground where the seed fell represent the different states of heart of those who hear the word. Through this parable Jesus taught the fact that even when the same word of the kingdom is delivered, according to the heart of the hearer the word can be snatched away, wither, or be choked, but in the good heart that hears the word and understands it, it bears abundant fruit.

Therefore Jesus, sitting in the boat by the sea, spoke of the kingdom of heaven to the multitude on the shore in many parables, beginning with the parable of the sower, and taught with what kind of heart people must hear and receive the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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[Question] 3. Matthew 13:3—the intention of speaking spiritual truth through parables of things and events.

A parable is a method of teaching that explains spiritual truth and the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven by taking as examples things or events that people easily encounter in daily life.

"Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: 'Behold, a sower went out to sow" (Matthew 13:3).

Jesus used familiar objects such as the farmer sowing seed, the field, the mustard seed, the leaven, and the treasure to teach the invisible principles of the kingdom of God.

A parable is not a merely entertaining story but a word containing spiritual meaning within it. The person who seeks to receive the word of God can understand its meaning, but the person whose heart is stubborn may hear the story and yet fail to understand its spiritual meaning.

[Question] 4. Matthew 13:4–9—in the parable of the sower, what do the four kinds of ground and the results of the seed each mean?

The four kinds of places where the seed fell mean the different states of heart of those who hear the word of God, and the difference in fruit arises from each person's response in receiving the word.

"And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the

sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:4–8).

The seed that fell by the wayside means the stubborn heart that hears the word and does not understand it. As the birds devoured the seed, the wicked one snatches away the word sown in that heart.

The seed that fell on the stony places means the person who immediately receives the word with joy but has no root in his heart. Because faith has not taken deep root, when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he soon stumbles.

The seed that fell among the thorns means the person who hears the word but whose heart is taken captive by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. The word is choked by the thorns and cannot grow, and so he bears no spiritual fruit.

The seed that fell on the good ground means the person who hears the word, understands it, and receives it with the heart. Obeying the word, he bears abundant fruit—a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.

Therefore this parable teaches the fact that even when the same word of God is delivered, entirely different results appear according to the heart and attitude of the hearer.

[Question] 5. Matthew 13:10–14—why did Jesus speak to the multitude in parables?

The reason Jesus taught in parables was so that the disciples who receive the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven by faith

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would understand their meaning, while to those whose hearts are hardened and who refuse the word, those mysteries would be hidden.

"He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matthew 13:11–13).

A parable has two functions.

First, it has the function of revealing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The disciples who believe Jesus' word and seek to know its meaning understand the parables and come to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven more abundantly.

Next, it has the function of hiding the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Those who see Jesus' words and miracles and yet do not believe cannot understand the spiritual meaning of the parables even when they hear them. This is because, though they have the eyes and ears of the flesh, they have not received the word with the heart.

"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive" (Matthew 13:14).

Therefore Jesus spoke in parables not simply to explain difficult content easily, but to expose the state of people's hearts and faith and to distinguish those who would receive the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from those who would refuse them.

[Question] 6. Matthew 13:12—how did Jesus distinguish the person who understands and believes the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from the person who does not?

Jesus said that the person who receives and understands the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven comes to know them more abundantly, but the person who does not receive them loses even what he has.

"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him" (Matthew 13:12).

He who has is the person who believes and receives Jesus' word and understands the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Such a person understands more truth and his faith becomes abundant.

He who does not have is the person who hears the word and yet does not believe and refuses to understand. Such a person loses even the word he has already heard and the opportunity of understanding that was given to him.

Therefore, according to the heart with which one hears and receives the word of God, one either comes to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven more abundantly, or on the contrary grows farther away from that word.

[Question] 7. Matthew 13:14–15—in what spiritual state are the people who do not know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven?

Those who do not understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are in the state of having a hardened heart, dull ears,

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and closed spiritual eyes.

"And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'" (Matthew 13:14–15).

Their spiritual state is as follows.

• They hear the word but do not understand its meaning.

• They see Jesus' words and the works He did, but do not know who He is.

• Their hearts are hardened and they do not receive the word of God.

• Their spiritual ears are dull and they do not respond to the truth.

• They close their spiritual eyes of their own accord and refuse to turn to God.

Therefore the fundamental reason they do not understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is not that they lack knowledge, but that with stubborn hearts they do not receive the word and do not seek to turn to God.

[Question] 8. What is the blessing the disciples received, that is, what they saw and heard in Matthew 13:16–17?

The blessing the disciples received was that they saw Jesus directly, heard His word, and were enabled to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

"But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for

they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matthew 13:16–17).

Many prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament desired to see and hear the Christ who was to come and the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, but they did not experience it directly. But the disciples saw Jesus directly, heard His word, and witnessed the work of salvation prophesied in the Old Testament being fulfilled.

Therefore the disciples' blessing was not merely that they saw Jesus with the eyes of the flesh and heard the word with their ears, but that they believed in Him as the Christ and came to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven with the heart.

[Question] 9. Matthew 13:18–23—in the parable of the sower, what do the seed and the four kinds of ground each refer to?

In the parable of the sower, the *"seed"* means the word of the kingdom, that is, the word of God. The four kinds of places where the seed was sown mean the different states of heart of those who hear the word.

The wayside: the person who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it. The wicked one comes and snatches away the word sown in his heart.

The stony places: the person who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, but has no root in his heart. When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he soon stumbles.

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The thorns: the person who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he bears no fruit.

The good ground: the person who hears the word and understands it. He receives that word and bears fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold.

"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside" (Matthew 13:19).

"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

Therefore, even when the same word of the kingdom is delivered, different results appear according to the heart and response of the person who hears it.

[Question] 10. Matthew 13:23—what fruit does the word sown on the good ground bear?

The word sown on the good ground bears fruit—some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (Matthew 13:23).

The good ground does not mean a person whose character is good and faultless from the beginning. It refers to the person who exalts the word of God above his own thoughts, and hears, understands, and believes that word with the heart. When he is

rebuked by the word, he admits his own thoughts and faults, and he removes by the word the unbelief like stones and thorns in his heart and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches.

The first fruit borne on the good ground is receiving the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. When a person believes the Word that says that Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, all the sins in his heart disappear, and he becomes righteous. This is the fruit of salvation borne through the word.

The person who has received the remission of sin does not stop there but keeps being supplied with the word of God and puts down the roots of faith. Even when tribulation or persecution comes, he does not cast away the word, and he denies himself and follows the Lord so that the gospel is not choked by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. He also unites with God's church, preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit to other souls, and serves it, so that still others receive the remission of sin.

The difference of a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold shows that not everyone bears the same measure of fruit. According to the office each person has received, the measure of his faith, and the degree to which he has given himself for the gospel, the amount of fruit can differ. But in that the word fallen on good ground surely bears fruit, they are the same.

Therefore the fruit of the word sown on the good ground means understanding and believing the word and receiving the remission of sin, and keeping that faith to the end, serving and preaching the gospel so that other souls are also saved. God wants those who have received the remission of sin not to live

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only for their own flesh, but to bear the abundant fruit of the gospel until the day the Lord comes.

[Question] 11. In Matthew 13:24, to what kind of person did Jesus compare the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Matthew 13:24).

In this parable the one who sows the good seed refers to the Son of Man, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom. Jesus delivers the word of the kingdom to the field of the world, and establishes as the people of God those who believe that word.

[Question] 12. What is the tare in Matthew 13:25 spiritually?

The tare is a weed that grows in wheat fields, called poisonous ryegrass or false wheat, and it is generally understood to refer to Lolium temulentum, a plant of the grass family. In English it is called darnel.

"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way" (Matthew 13:25).

When tares begin to grow they look very similar to wheat and are hard to distinguish, and the difference becomes clear only around the time the heads of grain form. Also, since their roots can become entangled with those of the wheat, pulling up

the tares early carries the risk of pulling up the wheat with them.

In the parable, the tare is a being that looks similar to grain on the outside but cannot bear good fruit, and spiritually it symbolizes those who belong to the wicked one.

[Question] 13. Matthew 13:25–30—what spiritual lessons does the parable of the tares give us?

The parable of the tares teaches the fact that in this world the people of God and those who belong to the wicked one exist together, but at the last judgment God surely distinguishes them.

"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matthew 13:28–30).

The spiritual lessons to be gained from this parable are as follows.

First, the One who sows the good seed is Jesus, and the enemy who sows the tares is the devil.

Second, in this world the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one live together.

Third, man cannot fully know or judge another person's heart and faith.

Fourth, if one hastily tries to remove the wicked, he can rather bring harm even to the people of God.

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Fifth, God allows evil not because He approves of it, but because He is longsuffering until the last judgment.

Sixth, as at harvest time the tares are burned in the fire and the grain enters the barn, at the end of the age the wicked are judged and the righteous enter the kingdom of God.

Therefore the believer must not hastily judge or try to condemn others, but must entrust the final discernment and judgment to God. And he must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, become good grain, and live bearing the fruit of faith that pleases God.

[Question] 14. Matthew 13:31–32—how does the parable of the mustard seed show the kingdom of heaven?

In the parable of the mustard seed, the kingdom of heaven is described as a single mustard seed that begins very small but, after it has grown, grows so greatly that many beings come to nest in it.

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.'" (Matthew 13:31–32).

The gospel of the kingdom at first seemed to begin small and feeble through Jesus and a small number of disciples. But as the gospel was preached, the kingdom of God expanded greatly, and countless people came into it and obtained salvation and rest.

Therefore the parable of the mustard seed teaches that the

kingdom of God begins small but grows and expands wonderfully.

[Question] 15. Matthew 13:33—what aspect of the kingdom of heaven is shown by the property of a little leaven spreading through much meal and leavening it all?

Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to the property of leaven, which even in a small amount spreads through the whole meal and leavens it all.

"Another parable He spoke to them: 'The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.'" (Matthew 13:33).

Leaven is at first hardly visible in the meal, but as it spreads inside it finally changes the whole. In the same way, the gospel of the kingdom also seems to begin small and unseen, but it gradually spreads through people's hearts and the world and brings about great change.

Therefore the parable of the leaven teaches that the kingdom of God has the power to keep spreading from within and to change the whole.

[Question] 16. Explain the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the parables and the things hidden, quoted in Matthew 13:34–35.

That Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables was the fulfillment of the word prophesied, that the prophet would open his mouth in parables and utter the secrets hidden from the

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foundation of the world.

"All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: 'I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world.'" (Matthew 13:34–35).

The background of this word is Psalm 78:2.

"I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old" (Psalm 78:2).

Therefore, that Jesus spoke in parables was not a mere method of teaching but the fulfillment of the word prophesied in the Old Testament. Through parables Jesus revealed the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven that had been hidden from ancient times.

[Question] 17. Matthew 13:36–43—what is the picture of the judgment to be carried out at the end of the age, pointed to through the parable of the tares?

Jesus explained directly what the objects appearing in the parable of the tares refer to. He who sows the good seed is Jesus, the Son of Man; the field is the world; the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed the tares is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

"The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels" (Matthew 13:38–39).

At the end of the age, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, actually

sends the angels and completely distinguishes the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the wicked one. This judgment is not carried out by a person deciding by his own judgment that another person is wheat or a tare. It is the final judgment that Jesus, who knows exactly every person's heart and faith, carries out through the angels.

First the angels gather out of the kingdom of God all things that offend and those who practice lawlessness. As the tares are gathered and burned at harvest time, those who have not believed the true gospel but followed falsehood, and have led even other souls into the wrong way, cannot escape God's judgment.

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:41–42).

The furnace of fire into which the tares are thrown represents God's eternal punishment. That there is wailing and gnashing of teeth there shows that those who have been judged realize their fault and their destruction, but there is no longer any opportunity to turn back or be saved. In the world the wheat and the tares live together and may even look similar in outward appearance, but at the last judgment no one can hide his identity.

The tares do not mean merely people who are morally lacking or weak. They refer to those who outwardly say they believe in Jesus, yet believe the false gospel the devil has sown, so that sin remains as it is in their hearts. Teachings that say one must wash away his sins by human works and repeated prayers of repentance, or that deny the complete remission of sin Jesus accomplished, leave souls sinners.

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On the other hand, the sons of the kingdom are those who have received the remission of sin by believing the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished. Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins, was crucified, shed His blood, and received the judgment for them, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart is remitted of all sins, becomes righteous, and becomes a child of God.

Unlike the tares thrown into the furnace of fire, the righteous enter the kingdom of their Father and come to shine like the sun.

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:43).

This means that the righteous who have received the remission of sin will live enjoying eternal life and glory in the kingdom of God. There, there is no sin, death, sorrow, or pain, and the righteous enjoy a glorious life with God forever.

Therefore the judgment at the end of the age shown by the parable of the tares is the final separation in which the tares enter the punishment of eternal fire, and the righteous, the wheat, enjoy eternal glory in the kingdom of their Father. Now there is opportunity to believe the gospel of salvation, but when the harvest time comes there is no more opportunity. Therefore a person must not look only at what religious body he belongs to, but must clearly confirm whether he has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit that completely washes the sins of the heart and has become a son of the kingdom.

[Question] 18. Matthew 13:44—how is the kingdom of heaven described in the parable of the man who found treasure hidden in a field and for joy sold all that he had and bought that field?

In this parable the kingdom of heaven is described as a treasure so precious and valuable that, though it is hidden in a field and not everyone recognizes its value, once a person finds it he will give up all that he has to gain it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44).

That the treasure was hidden in the field shows that the truth of salvation Jesus Christ accomplished is not easily visible to the eyes of the people of the world. Many people read the Bible and say they believe in Jesus, but they may fail to understand the righteousness of God and the gospel of the remission of sin hidden in the word. But the person who finds this treasure through the word comes to know that its value is more precious than any riches or honor of the world.

The treasure hidden in the field refers to Jesus Christ, the gospel of the water and the Spirit He accomplished, and the remission of sin and the eternal kingdom of heaven given to the person who believes this gospel. Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and died on the Cross, shedding His blood, and completed our salvation by rising from the dead. When one believes this gospel he is remitted of all sins, becomes a child of God, and obtains the right to enter the kingdom of heaven.

That the man who found the treasure rejoiced means that the person who has understood the true gospel does not give up

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the things of the world by compulsion, but chooses faith with the joy of having gained something greater and eternal. Because he knows that he has been saved from sin and judgment and has obtained eternal life, he comes to regard the gospel as more precious than anything.

The words that he sold all that he had do not mean that one buys the kingdom of heaven by paying money or piling up good deeds. Salvation cannot be bought with human riches or works; it is received by faith as the grace Jesus Christ has completed. Selling all one has here represents the resolve of faith to lay down one's own thoughts, one's own righteousness, and wrong religious beliefs, to acknowledge that only the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true truth, and to give one's heart and life to the Lord.

Because this man knew the value of the treasure, he did not sell only part but sold all that he had. In the same way, the person who has met the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not regard the gospel as one among the many values of the world. He does not put his own desires and worldly aims before the Lord, but makes the preaching of the gospel and the will of God the most important aim of his life. Though the flesh is weak and he cannot always live perfectly, in his heart he acknowledges that the word of God is right and believes and follows the Lord.

Therefore this parable teaches that the kingdom of heaven is the most precious treasure that cannot be exchanged for anything in the world. The person who has found this treasure believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, obtains the remission of sin and eternal life, and, regarding Jesus Christ and His kingdom as more precious than all he has, follows the Lord with joy.

[Question] 19. Matthew 13:45–46—how does the parable of the man who found one pearl of great price and sold all that he had and bought it express the value of the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus expressed the kingdom of heaven as the one pearl of great price found by a merchant who was seeking beautiful pearls.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46).

The merchant, while seeking beautiful pearls, found one pearl of greatest price and sold all that he had and bought it. This means that the kingdom of heaven is more precious than any possession or value of the world, and the person who has realized its value comes to put the kingdom of heaven first.

That he sold all that he had does not mean that one buys the kingdom of heaven with human riches or merit, but that the person who has discovered the value of the kingdom of heaven regards it as precious enough to lay down everything else.

[Question] 20. Matthew 13:47–50—what do the parable of the dragnet and the parable of the tares have in common?

The parable of the dragnet and the parable of the tares use different materials, but they teach the same truth: that now the righteous and the wicked exist together, and at the end of the age God completely distinguishes them and renders different judgments.

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"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47–50).

What the two parables have in common is as follows.

First, at present the righteous and the wicked exist together. In the parable of the tares, the wheat and the tares grow together in one field, and in the parable of the dragnet, the good fish and the bad come together into one net. Like this, in the world and within Christianity, those who believe the true gospel and those who follow a false gospel exist together. It may be hard to distinguish the two exactly by outward appearance alone.

Second, the final separation is not carried out immediately but at the appointed time. The wheat and the tares grow together until the harvest, and the fish of every kind are distinguished after the net is full and drawn to shore. God is longsuffering, even now giving sinners the opportunity to hear the true gospel and receive the remission of sin. But that opportunity does not continue forever.

Third, both parables point to the judgment at the end of the age. As the harvest time of the parable of the tares is the end of the age, in the parable of the dragnet also Jesus said, *"So it will be at the end of the age."* At the end of the age Jesus Christ sends the angels and completely separates the righteous and the wicked.

Fourth, the One who executes judgment and salvation is God. The reapers who gather the tares are the angels, and the

angels are also employed in the work of distinguishing the good fish and the bad. Therefore it is not man who decides another person's final destiny by his own thoughts and standards; God, who knows exactly the faith of the heart, judges righteously.

Fifth, the results after the separation are completely different from each other. The tares are bound in bundles to be burned, and the bad fish are thrown away and cast into the furnace of fire. This represents that the wicked receive the eternal punishment of hell. On the other hand, the grain enters the owner's barn and the good fish are gathered into vessels. This means that the righteous who have received the remission of sin enter the kingdom of God and enjoy eternal life and glory.

The two parables teach that one is not saved by the mere fact of having come into the net of the church or Christianity. Even if one calls on the name of Jesus and leads a religious life, if sin remains as it is in his heart he can be revealed as wicked on the last day. What matters is not what denomination or body one belongs to, but whether one has believed with the heart the true remission of sin God has accomplished.

The righteous who correspond to the good grain and the good fish are those who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus had all the sins of the world passed on to His own body through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and died on the Cross, shedding His blood, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. The person who believes this gospel with the heart is remitted of all sins, becomes righteous, and becomes a child of God.

Therefore the common lesson of the parable of the tares and the parable of the dragnet is that at the end of the age the final

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separation of the righteous and the wicked surely takes place. At that time what is revealed is not outward faith or human good deeds, but whether one has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has accomplished. Therefore, while there is still opportunity for salvation, we must believe the true gospel and deliver this gospel of life to other souls as well.

[Question] 21. Matthew 13:52—to whom did Jesus say the *"scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven"* is like?

Jesus compared the *"scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven"* to a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.

"Then He said to them, 'Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.'" (Matthew 13:52).

Here the old things mean the word delivered by the Law and the prophets of the Old Testament, and the new things mean the new teaching of the kingdom of heaven that Jesus made plain.

The scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is the person who understands together the word of the Old Testament and the word of the kingdom fulfilled and revealed through Jesus, and teaches them rightly as the need arises. That is, it means a worker of the word who understands God's old revelation and new revelation in harmony and delivers them to others.

[Question] 22. Matthew 13:54—when Jesus taught in the synagogue of His own country, how did the people respond?

When Jesus taught in the synagogue of His hometown, the people were astonished at His wisdom and mighty works and raised the question of where they came from.

"When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?'" (Matthew 13:54).

They were astonished when they saw Jesus' wisdom and power, but they did not believe in Him and receive Him as the Christ. Rather, thinking only of Jesus' family and the background they knew He had grown up in, they doubted His authority and power. Therefore their astonishment was not an astonishment that led to faith, but a response mixed with unbelief and doubt.

[Question] 23. Matthew 13:55–56—as belonging to whose family only did the people of Nazareth see Jesus?

The people of Nazareth did not receive Jesus as the Son of God or the Christ, but thought of Him as an ordinary man of their hometown whom they knew well—the carpenter's son, the son of Mary.

"Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (Matthew 13:55–56).

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On the grounds that they knew Jesus' family and the background He grew up in, they judged Him only by human standards. So even when they saw Jesus' wisdom and power, they could not believe that He is the Christ sent by God. The preconception of knowing Him up close rather kept them from recognizing Jesus rightly.

[Question] 24. Matthew 13:57—when Jesus was rejected in His own country, what did He say about this situation?

When Jesus was rejected by the people of His hometown, He said that a prophet is not honored in his own country and in his own house.

"So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.'" (Matthew 13:57).

The people of His hometown, on the grounds that they knew Jesus' family and the process of His growing up, saw Him only as an ordinary man. Caught in human preconceptions, they did not acknowledge Jesus' wisdom and power, and did not receive Him as the Christ sent by God. This word warns that one must not judge a man of God by fleshly standards because of close relationship and familiarity.

[Question] 25. Matthew 13:58—seeing the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, how did Jesus limit the mighty works He did there?

Seeing the unbelief of the people of Nazareth, Jesus did not

do many mighty works there.

"Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58).

This was not because Jesus lacked power, but because the people of His hometown did not believe in Him and rejected Him. By not receiving Jesus' word and power, they lost the opportunity to experience the grace and power the Lord bestows. Therefore the person caught in unbelief refuses of his own accord the grace and power the Lord bestows. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The good heart that receives the word and bears fruit

< Matthew 13:1-23 >

"On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: 'Behold, a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!' And the disciples came and said to Him, 'Why do You speak to them in parables?' He answered and said to them, 'Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not

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understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. 'Therefore hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.'"

The multitude gathered by the sea and the Lord who sows the seed

When Jesus sat by the sea, great multitudes gathered. Jesus got into a boat and sat, and spoke many parables to the people standing on the shore. The first one recorded among them is the

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parable of the sower. The figure of a farmer sowing seed was very familiar to the people of that day. But through this ordinary scene Jesus revealed the deep mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

The sower refers first to Jesus. Jesus came to this earth and preached the word of the kingdom, and through the disciples He caused that word to be spread to the whole world. Today also, God sows the seed of life through the churches and workers who believe the gospel. The preacher is not a person who produces life, but a person who honestly sows the seed God has given.

The person who sows the seed does not calculate beforehand which field will yield how much fruit and sow selectively. He sows generously on the wayside, on the stony places, among the thorns, and on the good ground as well. Therefore the worker of the gospel must not judge the possibility of a person's salvation by his outward appearance and circumstances. Even a person whose heart looks hardened now can have his own thoughts broken while he hears the word again and again. Therefore the church must not lose heart but must deliver the word of life to every soul.

The seed is the same, but the fields differ

The seed the farmer sowed was the same seed. It was not that the life-power of the seed that fell by the wayside differed from that of the seed that fell on the stony places, among the thorns, or on the good ground. The reason the results differed was that the states of the fields that received the seed differed. Through the four kinds of field Jesus showed the different hearts of those who hear the word.

The state of a field is not fixed like fate. Even hard ground

becomes soft when it is plowed, and when the stones are picked out and the thorns pulled up, the seed can grow. A person's heart also can change when it is rebuked by the word of God and admits what it is. Therefore there is no need to despair upon discovering that one is like the wayside or the stony places. Rather, from the moment one admits it, God can cultivate the heart into a good field.

The parables expose the heart

The disciples asked Jesus why He spoke to the multitude in parables. A parable is a method of explaining invisible spiritual truth through visible things and events. The person whose heart is humble hears the parable and, wanting to know the meaning contained in it, draws near to the Lord. But the person who has no heart to learn the truth hears only the outward story and passes by.

The disciples also did not understand all the parables from the beginning. But they admitted what they did not know, and came to Jesus and asked. This is the important difference. The person who knows the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is not the person with much knowledge, but the person who admits his lack and has the heart to learn from the Lord. The humility that admits what one does not know opens the door of understanding.

The blessing of knowing the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven

Jesus said that to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven had been given to the disciples. The mysteries of the

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kingdom of heaven are not a philosophy found by researching with the wisdom of the world. They are the truth of salvation that God shows through the word and makes understood in the heart that believes that word.

Today we can know these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven still more clearly through the written Scriptures. How Jesus saved sinners, how a person is born again of water and the Spirit, and who becomes a child of God are made plain in the word. This mystery cannot be obtained with money or position; it is opened to the person who receives the word as the word of God.

To know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is not merely to obtain information about the kingdom of heaven to come. It is to know how a sinner receives the remission of sin and comes to belong to the kingdom of God now. Human effort cannot erase the sin of the heart, but when one believes the righteousness of salvation God has accomplished, the sinner becomes righteous. The person who has come to believe this fact is the person who has received the greatest blessing, whatever his circumstances in the world. It is a greater blessing to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and understand and believe its meaning than to see many miracles with the eyes.

The hardened heart closes its own eyes

Jesus said that the hearts of this people had grown hardened, their ears dull of hearing, and their eyes closed. This does not mean that God forcibly covered people's eyes so that they could not believe the truth. It means that the people refused to hear the word in order to keep their own thoughts and desires. It is like being unable to see, though the light shines, when one closes his eyes.

On the contrary, the person who fears God, when the word differs from his own thoughts, does not try to correct the word but examines his own thoughts. When his deeds and heart are exposed as evil in the light of the word, he admits it rather than making excuses. The heart that knows its own place before God is not a weak heart but a wise heart.

Hardness usually hides not in openly denying God but in religious self-assurance. The fact that one has long prayed and served, the fact that one has much Bible knowledge, can become grounds for setting up one's own righteousness instead of lowering the heart. But before God, the heart that receives the word matters more than a person's career. The reason we must stand before the word daily is not to find other people's faults, but to examine whether our own thoughts are growing hardened.

The heart hardened like the wayside

The wayside is ground trodden by many people and hardened solid. Since the seed cannot enter the soil and remains on the surface, the birds come and eat it. Jesus explained this as the wicked one coming and snatching away what was sown in the heart when one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it.

It is the same when one hears the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who says he believes in Jesus while thinking it natural that sin remains in his heart finds it hard to receive the word that Jesus actually removed all sins. His own thought, 'How can a person be without sin?', pushes out the word. Then Satan uses that doubt to keep the seed of life from entering the heart.

Especially in the matter of sin, one must believe God's

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verdict rather than human common sense. A person easily judges himself still a sinner, looking at his own lacking deeds. But if Jesus took on all sins and was judged, the believer must acknowledge, according to the word of God, that he has received the remission of sin. Refusing God's testimony in order to keep one's own feeling is the hardness of the wayside. On the contrary, the heart that believes that God's verdict is right breaks the hard soil and receives the seed of the gospel.

The passing joy of the shallow stony places

The seed that fell on the stony places sprang up at once because the soil was shallow. Outwardly it seemed to grow faster than the other seeds. But because the roots could not go down deep, when the sun rose it was scorched and withered. Jesus explained that this is the person who immediately receives the word with joy but stumbles when tribulation or persecution arises.

Rejoicing emotionally at hearing the word and putting down roots in the word are different things. When one first hears the news of the remission of sin, the heart can become glad and light. But when one's own evil is exposed, when one suffers misunderstanding and reproach because of the gospel, and when the moment comes to lay down one's own will, the depth of that faith is revealed.

Tribulation and persecution are not evidence that something is wrong with the word; rather, they become the time when the depth of the roots is revealed. When we are not understood by those close to us because of the gospel, or when we collide with the values of the world, we must return to the word of life we heard at first. At that time our feelings may be shaken, but the

salvation Jesus accomplished is not shaken. When we confirm and believe the word again in trials, the shallow roots go down deeper, and faith grows from simple joy into assurance.

The thorns choke the word

The seed that fell among the thorns also sprouted and grew. But the thorns grew together with it and choked the strength of the seed, and so it bore no fruit. Jesus interpreted this as the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choking the word. Even if one has heard the word, if the main interest of the heart is taken captive by worldly cares and material things, spiritual fruit cannot grow.

To remove the thorns does not mean to throw away every occupation and possession and leave the world. It means to set rightly what one regards as most precious. One must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and bear the affairs of the world as responsibilities God has entrusted. If one sees cares as greater than the gospel, the word is choked; but if one believes the Lord's promise, one can bear fruit even amid cares.

Thorns can grow again even after being pulled up once. Even after being saved, the flesh wants to be more comfortable and to possess more, and worries about tomorrow in advance. So the believer must keep examining what is growing in his heart. When worldly cares grow large, rather than holding them alone, he must receive the help of faith in the word and in the church. When one keeps in his heart the clear aim of serving the gospel, cares and greed lose the master's seat, and material things and daily life also become good instruments for the gospel.

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The good field admits what it is before the Word

Jesus said that what was sown on the good ground is the person who hears the word and understands it. The good field does not mean a perfect person who from the beginning has no stones and no thorns at all. It means the person who, before the word of God, admits his own hardness like the wayside, his own stubbornness like the stones, and his own desires like the thorns.

The good field receives the word as the truth, not its own feelings. Even when it feels as if sin remains in him, he believes the word that Jesus took on the sin of the world. Even when he feels that he is lacking and unqualified to be saved, he believes that salvation was accomplished not by human qualification but by the grace of God.

The good field does not receive the word selectively. It does not welcome only the word that comforts while pushing away the word that makes it cast off its own thoughts. In receiving the remission of sin through the gospel, and in living after salvation following the guidance of the church, it stands on the side of the word of God. Even when the word is not understood at once, he waits and learns with the faith that God is more right than himself. In such a heart the fruit of obedience, service, and preaching grows.

The life the gospel of the water and the Spirit plants

At the center of the word of the kingdom is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished. A person cannot enter the kingdom of God carrying sin. So Jesus said in John 3:5, *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is*

born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.".

Matthew 3:15 says, *"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him."*. After Jesus fulfilled all righteousness with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, John the Baptist testified in John 1:29, *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*.

Jesus, carrying the sin of the world that was passed onto Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, went to the Cross. On the Cross He shed His blood, received all the judgment of sin, and died, and He rose again in three days. Jesus' baptism, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are one gospel that completely saved sinners. The person who believes this gospel with the heart receives the remission of sin and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, becoming a child of God.

The water here does not mean water that merely washes the body or a religious ceremony man performs. It refers to the saving work by which Jesus had the sins of mankind passed onto Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The blood represents the judgment by which He bore the wages of those sins on the Cross, and the Holy Spirit testifies to the fact that Jesus is God and that this salvation is true. The water, the blood, and the Spirit are not three separate salvations, but testify to the one gospel by which Jesus Christ completely saved sinners.

This gospel does not speak of a way in which a person washes his sins little by little by praying prayers of repentance daily. It is the glad news that the sins of our whole life were passed onto Jesus with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and that the judgment of those sins was finished once and for all on the Cross. Repentance is not a merit by which one

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erases his own sins, but turning from wrong belief and wrong ways to believe the salvation God has accomplished. The good heart does not make its own zeal the ground of salvation but wholly receives the righteousness of Jesus.

The faith that puts down roots in the Word

The person who has received the remission of sin must also keep putting down roots in the word. Since Jesus completed salvation, it is not accomplished repeatedly according to our deeds. But for the saved heart to overcome the falsehood of the world and the desires of the flesh and bear fruit, it must keep being supplied with the word of God.

Satan shows the believer his shortcomings and accuses him, saying he is a sinner again. At that time we must not try to stand against him with our own deeds, but must hold on to the word that Jesus removed all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and the blood of the Cross. Our state changes, but the salvation the Lord accomplished does not change.

The believer rooted in the word does not think that he maintains salvation by doing well. The ground of salvation is unchangeably in the righteousness of Jesus. At the same time, he does not say that having received grace he may live however he pleases. He wants to know the will of the Lord who saved him, learns choices profitable to the gospel, and when he has done wrong, admits that wrong and turns back. The assurance of salvation and obedience to the word are not opposites; they are two fruits coming from the same life.

The fruit God causes to be borne

The seed that fell on the good ground bore fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold, and thirtyfold. The amounts of fruit differed, but all were fruits of life. God does not demand the same ability and role of every believer. He causes each person to bear the fruit of the gospel according to his circumstances and the measure of his faith.

The fruit is first that one soul believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receives the remission of sin. When the saved person preaches the gospel to another, yet another soul obtains life. The gospel that began like a single seed is passed from person to person, and the people of the kingdom of God increase.

Therefore there is no need to lose heart when the fruit seems slow. If we become good fields, keep the word in our hearts, and keep sowing the seed of the gospel, God causes fruit to be borne at the time He has appointed. Our responsibility is to soften our hearts before the word, to believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit Jesus accomplished, and to deliver that word honestly to other souls.

The fruit of the good field in the end reveals that there is life within. The person who has believed the gospel does not become a person with perfect flesh, but he lives in the direction of regarding the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls as precious. Even when he falls, he returns again to the gospel, exalts the righteousness of Jesus above his own righteousness, and delivers the seed of life he has received to others. Through such hearts the Lord is bearing the fruit of the kingdom of heaven today as well. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who has given us the kingdom of heaven

< Matthew 13:24-30 >

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'''"

Our Lord spoke of the kingdom of heaven with the parable of the tares from Matthew 13:24. He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared" (Matthew 13:24–26)*. Today, through this word, I want us to look together at the fact that the Lord has given the kingdom of heaven to you and me.

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The Lord's will in letting the tares and the grain grow together

When we sow vegetables or grain in a field, we see that tares surely grow up beside them. But when we pull up these tares carelessly, it is not only the tares that are pulled up. The grain beside them is pulled up together with them. And so even the good grain ends up dying.

So our Lord said in this parable of the kingdom of heaven, *"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"" (Matthew 13:30).* In order to protect the grain, He said to leave the tares to grow together with the grain until the end of the world.

But when the last time comes, the Lord commands the reapers. The tares He first gathers and binds in bundles to be burned. The grain He gathers into His barn. It is the word that at the last He judges between heaven and hell, and also gives rewards.

The tares and the good grain differ clearly

The Lord has given the kingdom of heaven to you and me. In verse 24 of the passage He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."* This is the word that He first sows the good seed in the field of our human hearts, and at the last brings us into the kingdom of heaven.

Yet even good seed, when it is first sown, looks like nothing much. It sprouts up just like the tares. At times it even comes up rather feeble. Even in the middle of its growing, it looks no better

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than the tares.

But when the grain is fully ripe, things change. When the sprout comes up, the flower blooms, and the fruit ripens, the tares and the good grain differ clearly. It is said that by the fruit one knows the tree. Only when one sees the fruit does one come to know whether it was good seed and a good tree.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit sown in the field of our hearts

Our Lord came to this earth and sowed good seed in the heart-field of every person in the world. That seed is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him by receiving baptism from John. And He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, shedding His blood and dying. And He rose again from the dead and completed our salvation.

There are people who have received this seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit into their hearts. In such a person's heart the gospel takes its place, sprouts, blossoms, and bears fruit. But there are also people who have failed to receive that seed. When we sow that seed, it looks like nothing much. But at the last, when the Owner looks, the good grain He surely brings into the barn. What is not right, what is like the tares, He cuts down and binds in bundles to be burned.

Like this, God has given the kingdom of heaven to you and me. In the heart-field of every person living on this earth, the seed of heaven and the seed of hell have been sown together. Satan the devil came and sowed the seed of hell. But God sowed the seed of heaven in some people. Each person bears fruit at the last according to the seed he has received into his own heart. And

so, by the reapers, people are divided and go to two different places.

Let us think a little more deeply about what is being said here. When we first receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit, it feels like nothing at all. It feels only like: so Jesus took my sins away with the baptism He received from John; so I have received the remission of sin. While it grows, too, it looks little different from the tares. At times the tares even look more splendid. But the result is entirely different. That one small seed sown in our hearts causes us to be born again of water and the Spirit. And so it brings us into the kingdom of heaven, into God's barn.

How did hell come into being?

Then where do all the people of this world who have not been born again go? The Scriptures speak much of heaven and hell. What kind of place is hell? Hell is the fire into which, as the word of the passage says, they are bound in bundles to be burned and thrown. Hell is a great and wide sea of fire. A sea of fire like a huge incinerator is hell. In the Gospel of Matthew In the Gospel of Matthew also, John the Baptist testified that the Lord would judge people, saying, *"He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11)*.

Then how did hell come into being? Did God make hell from the beginning? The Scriptures say it is not so. They say there is a clear cause for hell having come into being. Let us look together from Isaiah 14:12.

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will

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ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit" (Isaiah 14:12–15).

The proud angel who tried to become like God

Here *"Lucifer, son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12)* refers to a star. That is, it is a word referring to an angel. The Scriptures explain like this the things of the invisible world by holding up the visible world. This is what a parable is. It is like our giving an example in order to explain some reality.

This word is originally a rebuke against the kings of the neighboring nations that tormented Israel. Nations like Assyria and Babylon tormented Israel. God, while rebuking those kings, speaks at the same time of the affair of the angel who fell in ancient times. Those who have not been born again feel confusion at this point. Not knowing the Scriptures, they wonder why, while speaking of a man, He suddenly mixes in the fallen angel.

The angel we commonly call Lucifer challenged God. He was the highest among the angels. Yet he challenged, trying to exalt his own throne to be like God. And so he was repulsed by God and fell to the earth. That fallen angel, cast out before God, is Satan, the devil. As the word of Isaiah 14:15 says, he came to be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit.

In this way hell was made. A creature tried to become like God. He tried to become God himself, to spread his own throne above God. And so he was cast out by God and came to be placed in Sheol. Here Sheol and the Pit speak of a deep pit whose

bottom cannot be reached. That place is hell. The place prepared for that proud angel who challenged God is hell.

Hell is the lake that burns with fire and brimstone

Looking at the Book of Revelation, this fallen angel fights with the angel Michael and is cast out. His subordinates are cast out together with him. Their leader is called the devil, and his underlings are called demons. This fallen angel came down into this world and tormented and killed people.

The proud angel became the devil, and his underlings became demons. And so Satan the devil works within all the religions of this world. He makes man try to become like God. He incites, saying that man is a god. Some religions teach that when a man attains liberation and escapes from the flesh, he becomes a god. In the end it means that man becomes a god.

This is the very act of challenging God. Through whom did all this come about? It came about through the fallen angel and his subordinates. They entered into people's hearts and stirred man up to become a god. Therefore the fallen angel and his subordinates, and all the people who have listened to their words, finally enter into Sheol. They enter into the Sheol of hell together with Satan the devil and his subordinates. This is hell.

So the Book of Revelation says that hell is a lake burning with fire. Let us look together from Revelation 20:13. *"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."*

And in 21:8 it also says like this. *"But the cowardly,*

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unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.'" The person not written in the Book of Life is thrown into this lake of fire. This is the second death.

It is the same in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. That rich man who failed to receive salvation by faith entered into the lake of fire and suffered torment. It was so hot that he begged for water to be dipped on the tip of a finger to cool his tongue. The person who has not received salvation enters like this into the fire of hell. That lake of fire is hell.

The beauty of the kingdom of heaven God has prepared

Then what kind of place is heaven? Let us open together to Revelation chapter 22. *"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:1–5).*

This kingdom of heaven is clearly a place that exists. The Scriptures tell us that fact. The holy New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God. It is said that its appearance is like a bride adorned for her husband. It is a truly immense and

beautiful city. From Revelation 21:10 it shows us that city like this.

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the

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earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life" (Revelation 21:10–27).

The kingdom of heaven is such a beautiful place. There is a city adorned with twelve precious stones, and its gates are made of pearls. In its setting flows the river of the water of life, and there is the tree of life bearing fruit in every season. There, there is no more death. There is no night and no pain. The place where there is only beauty is the kingdom of heaven. It is a truly good place.

The Lord who has given the kingdom of heaven to insignificant ones like us

God said, *"First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30)*. When we receive this gospel of the water and the Spirit, it looks like nothing much.

In the world there are many kinds of gospels. Some say they are saved by believing only in the blood of the Cross. Some say they are remitted of original sin only, and are sanctified by repenting daily, and finally receive salvation. But the gospel of the water and the Spirit is different. It is the complete gospel by which one believes in the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the Spirit, and receives the remission of sin once and for all. Between the faith that believes only in the blood of the Cross and the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit there is a clear difference.

Like this, when you and I first received salvation, good seed was sown in the field of our hearts. That is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit was sown. The person who received this gospel looked at first like nothing much. But as the years passed, the final result was entering the kingdom of heaven. Here there is a truly tremendous difference.

For what reason does God acknowledge you and me as good grain? He said, *"Gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30)*. You and I are no special people. Yet God has given us salvation and given us the kingdom of heaven. He has given the kingdom of heaven to you and me. And so we have come to have the hope of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is a place more beautiful than we can ever measure.

While we live in this complicated and weary world, in this age when the weariness of all things cannot be told in words, God has sown good seed in the field of your heart and mine. He has sown the seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And so He has given us the kingdom of heaven. This is grace that cannot be fully expressed in words. Our end result is, in the end, the kingdom of heaven. Though we live like this in this world, the person who has been born again—that is, the person who has received the good seed into the field of his heart and in whom that seed has grown—enters at the last into God's barn. That is, he enters the kingdom of heaven.

Living in this world, what other hope do we have besides this hope of entering the kingdom of heaven? What other hope could there be? There can be no other hope. God has given us the kingdom of heaven. We give thanks for this and are truly satisfied. Since we have not yet actually received it all, we do not fully feel it. But by faith we can receive and enjoy it in advance. The place where you and I are going is clearly a good place. It is a place where there is a city built with twelve precious

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stones, where fruit is borne in every season, and where there is no night, no disease, no pain, and no death. That truly golden, radiant, and beautiful kingdom of heaven, God has given to you and me.

If we believe this, what more could we desire in this world? Above all, hope springs up in the heart. It is that we will enter that place in the future. Because good seed was sown in the field of our hearts, we enter the kingdom of heaven. Receiving salvation was for the very purpose of giving us the kingdom of heaven. The person who has received salvation surely enters the kingdom of heaven. Now that seed looks very small and slight. But through believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit, we have finally come to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The creation also eagerly waits for the sons of God to be revealed

God has given us a great gift. He has given us a great blessing. We must always remember this fact and give thanks. We must live by faith with hope. The weariness of all these created things cannot be told in words. The creation also is waiting for the kingdom of God to come to this earth, for heaven to come. It is also waiting for the sons of God to be revealed. Let us look together from Romans 8:19.

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:19–23).

The creation also eagerly waits to reach the place where it no longer dies, where there is no pain, disease, or corruption. It waits to be delivered from bondage and to reach the glorious liberty of the sons of God. We enter the kingdom of heaven with spiritual bodies that never die again. Everything in that kingdom of heaven never dies and never decays forever.

Like this, all things also long for that kingdom of heaven where the sons of God will enter and live. The creation also longs for that kingdom of heaven God has given us. For all things also know that through sin death came and pain came. But there is also a time for all things to be born again. As we people have been born again, all things also, when they are born again, reach the glorious liberty. That kingdom of heaven, where a tree never dies and a plant never grows sick or dies again, the creation also is hoping for like this.

Not only so, but we also are the same. Romans 8:23 says, *"Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."*. What is it to wait for the redemption of our body? It is the kingdom of heaven. It is reigning as kings for a thousand years in the earthly paradise on this earth. It is also entering the heavenly kingdom and living together forever in the Father's kingdom. This is the kingdom of heaven. So verse 24 says, *"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?"*. If we hope for what we do not see, we must wait for it with perseverance.

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The faith that lives giving thanks in hope

God has given that kingdom of heaven to you and me. We live with the hope of entering this kingdom of heaven. It is the hope that in the future we will be transformed and enter the kingdom of heaven and live forever. If we live with this faith and this hope, we can truly live with thanksgiving. Of course, I am not saying that you are not thankful. Only, are not all these created things so weary? All the things God created are so weary and groaning. Our bodies also grow weary and groan. Yet God gives us the kingdom of heaven. He gives us the kingdom of God.

God gives us the kingdom of God. It is because we are the people who will enter and live there. God is passing down the kingdom of heaven to us as our inheritance, as our heritage. Because we will go and live in that kingdom in the future, we can live giving thanks with this faith and hope. When we received the gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus had all our sins passed onto Him by receiving baptism from John, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and saved us by rising from the dead—we had received only a small seed. But how precious is this gospel of the water and the Spirit! Through this good seed we have come to go to the kingdom of heaven. But those who have received into their hearts not the good seed but the seed of the tares go, unhappily, to hell.

God has given the kingdom of heaven to you, and to me. He has given us the kingdom of God. Before long we will enter and live in the kingdom of God. When the life of our body is spent on this earth, God takes us. Then we go to Paradise. The Lord said, *"You will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)*. Where the Lord is, that place is heaven. We come to enter that Paradise, that kingdom of heaven. God has given the kingdom of heaven to you and me.

We must never forget the fact that God has given us the kingdom of heaven. We must live without forgetting this gift of God, this gift of heaven. We must live by faith. We must live believing and waiting, giving thanks in hope. God has given us the kingdom of heaven as a gift on top of it all. We are truly thankful and thankful again. Since He has given us the kingdom of heaven, there is nothing more to desire. We can only give thanks. He said, *"Gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13:30)*. The person born again of water and the Spirit enters that barn. That barn is the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the gift God the Father has given to us who are saved. We must believe this fact and live giving thanks. Dear fellow believers, let us never forget that kingdom of heaven God has given, and live giving thanks by faith. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become wheat

< Matthew 13:24-30 >

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this." The servants said to him, "Do you want us then to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

Today is the third day of the conference. As it continues over many days, it is a time when your bodies are quite tired. But if you just get over this midday hurdle, from the evening new strength will spring up and you will be able to continue the conference with a new heart. Even if you are tired, do not force

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yourselves, but stay with a comfortable heart. In order to spread the gospel more widely, the servants of God must pray and labor for such things.

To spread the gospel of the water and the Spirit more widely, workers are needed and material things are also needed. The Lord said that some seed bears fruit thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold. If until now we have been bearing fruit thirtyfold, I believe that from now on God will bear fruit through us beyond that. We pray before God, and look ahead in faith to God Himself working. So we give thanks, go forward in faith, and challenge in faith, trusting that God will work in everything we do.

When a work we have challenged in faith is accomplished, we challenge a still greater work. When that work is accomplished again, while God rejoices we challenge yet a greater work. While we go forward like that, our hearts draw closer to the Lord. Later we come to experience our hearts becoming one with the Lord.

We come to experience in our hearts that the prayer we used to offer half-heartedly now changes into prayer in which our hearts become one with the Lord. It is a truly thankful thing. The servants of God easily think that they must do many things by themselves. But what enables us to carry out God's work is the power of faith God has given us. It is faith, and it is the power of God.

God gives faith and gives power so that we carry out God's work, bear fruit, and receive blessing. Therefore faith is truly important. It is necessary to unite in faith with all our hearts, to challenge in faith, and to follow the Lord step by step. I speak to you having experienced it.

Walking with the Lord is truly rewarding. Because God is not One who has passed away but the living God, when we do

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in God what pleases God, our hearts are truly glad. This midday hour is a somewhat delicate time to preach the word. For your bodies are drooping, and so is mine. But when evening comes, new strength will overflow in you. Today we have read Matthew 13:24–30.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field"

Looking at verse 24, the Lord spoke like this: *"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;"* In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus spoke in parables of the will He wants to accomplish, taking many examples from this earth. The meaning of this parable is as follows.

God is the One who sowed God's word of life in this world. Here the good seed is the word of life. God sowed that word in the world of men. This world, by that word which came down from God, became God's workplace and became God's field.

Therefore, through the sowing of God's word of life, this world became a world in which there is a harvest of fruit borne in that field. It looks like a simple word, but God made this world His own workplace. God called this world the field, and called the word He spoke the good seed. God's purpose in sowing the good seed in this world lies in making people God's people and bringing them into the kingdom of heaven.

So the Lord, saying, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field" (Matthew 13:24)*, shows that He has sown the word of God in this world and is waiting for the harvest of its good fruit.

The enemy sowed tares on top

Next we look at verses 25 and 26. *"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared."* This word means that while people did not know the word of the truth of the water and the Spirit, Satan the devil sowed a false gospel. God sowed in the heart-field of the people of this world the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which brings salvation from sin. Yet that good seed and the bad seed were sown together.

God worked, and Satan the devil also worked. While people did not know the word of the truth of the water and the Spirit, Satan worked diligently and sowed a false gospel.

Therefore two kinds of fruit were borne on this earth: the wheat and the chaff. Those who have truly become God's people, and the false ones who have failed to become God's people—that is, the tares—grew up together. So verse 27 says: *"So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'"*

Our Lord sowed good seed on this earth, but Satan the devil also sowed tares. Now the servants of the owner of the house—that is, those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit—ask like this: *"Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?"* The Lord clearly sowed good seed in this world. He sowed the gospel of the water and the Spirit—He sowed the food of life by which people can receive the remission of sin and obtain life. Then how did the tares come into being? How was a false gospel planted on this earth? This is what the servants asked.

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No—let both grow together until the harvest

So the Lord spoke like this in verses 28 and 29: *"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them."*

The words *"An enemy has done this"* mean that Satan the devil sowed the tares, and they were planted in people's hearts and came to bear fruit. That is, He is speaking of a false gospel. The enemy sowed a false gospel like this. When the servants asked, *"Do you want us then to go and gather them up?"*, the owner said, *"No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them" (Matthew 13:29)*.

Why did He say so? When the owner looks, in the field of this world there is the seed of life God has sown, the seed of eternal life and of the remission of sin. And there is another kind: the tares. This is what harms people and keeps them from receiving the remission of sin—a false gospel very similar to God's gospel of the water and the Spirit. These two can be entangled and mixed together.

Therefore the Lord said, *"No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them" (Matthew 13:29)*. For if this goes wrong, even the people who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit could be wounded and die. So He said, *"Let both grow together until the harvest" (Matthew 13:30)*.

Then in verse 30 He spoke like this: *"Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"'"* Looking at this word as a whole, in this world the seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit God has given was sown, and

the gospel of the tares, similar to it, was also sown. So in people's hearts two kinds of fruit are growing mixed together.

But the Lord says that at the last time He will Himself judge these two, so we are not to judge but to leave them as they are. At the last time the Lord will send the angels and first gather the tares and bind them in bundles to be burned, and He will gather the wheat into His barn. That is, He will take us, the wheat, to the kingdom of heaven and have us live together with the Lord.

The Lord said, *"Let both grow together until the harvest,"* for the sake of the wheat. All grain has its time of harvest. It is harvested by the owner, and the husks are burned by the owner. So we can sum up the meaning of this second parable like this: the kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, and the Lord has sown the word of life in this world and is waiting for its harvest. He wants to sow good seed and gain good fruit, but the problem is that there is much fruit that is not so.

But the Lord says, do not try to pull up the tares yourselves. Rather, He says, quietly serve this gospel of the water and the Spirit and sow the good seed. While people were sleeping the enemy sowed the tares; so your work is not to sleep but to sow the gospel of the truth properly. And He says, leave the judgment to the Lord.

This world is God's field and God's workplace

We must know exactly what this word is saying. This world is God's field and God's workplace. God has sown in this world the seed of life, the word of the salvation of the water and the Spirit. The devil also sowed seed in this world. So among the Christians of this world there are two kinds of people. There is

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the wheat, and there are the tares.

Yet they call one another chaff and wheat. They say, “I am the wheat and you are the chaff,” “Our denomination is the wheat and your denomination is the chaff.” But there clearly is good seed and seed that is not good. The good seed is the word of the gospel concerning the water and the Spirit by which He remitted the sins of mankind—the word of God. The bad seed is a delusive gospel that looks about ninety percent similar to the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In this world there are many such false gospels. God clearly delivered the gospel of the water and the Spirit to this world. It was delivered in the days of the apostles, and it had already been delivered before that, in the days of the Old Testament. If we look at the law of sacrifice of the Tabernacle, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is revealed there with certainty.

Yet people whose hearts are hardened see it and neither understand nor know it. So they regard the law of sacrifice as a mere form of offering sacrifices. People think, “So this is the form in which sacrifices were offered,” but within it is contained the truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit hidden in the Tabernacle

In the law of sacrifice there must be a clean sacrificial offering. The sinner must lay his hands on that offering and pass his sins onto it. Then he must kill the offering, take its blood, put it on the horns of the altar and sprinkle it on the ground and bring it before God, and burn the flesh and offer it to God. In this the gospel of the water and the Spirit is all contained.

That sacrificial offering refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus Christ came to this earth and, as the sinner lays his hands on the offering, received baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sins of mankind passed onto Him. Because the sins were passed onto Him, as the sacrificial offering is killed, Jesus Christ was nailed to the Cross and killed, shedding His blood. And He rose from the dead and became the Savior who saves us completely. All of this is contained in the law of sacrifice of the Tabernacle.

Yet God kept this hidden. Because He kept it hidden, people do not know it well. So when false ones come and preach a false gospel, people cannot discern it precisely, and if it looks ninety or ninety-five percent right, they accept all that is said.

Even a fastidious person is like that, and most people, if it is only eighty percent right, regard it as all the same. Some people, even at sixty percent similarity, pass over it saying, “This or that, it is all the same.” There are truly many such good-natured people. But the Lord says clearly that if it is not one hundred percent the same, it is not the same.

Therefore the Lord tells us to discern the good seed and the seed of the tares that is not good. Within Christianity, which claims to believe in God, there are those who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and there are those who preach a false gospel closely resembling the gospel of the water and the Spirit. So He is telling us to discern well what kind of world this is, what seed has been sown in people’s hearts, which is the good seed and which is the false seed. He said the tares were sown by the enemy—that is, by Satan the devil. Therefore we must listen carefully to what the tares are and what that enemy has done.

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The tares are people who have sin in their hearts

Dear fellow believers, what are the tares? The tares are people who have sin in their hearts. The tares are people who do not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The tares are people who believe blindly, taking away from God's gospel and adding to it as they please. Such people are called tares, those who have the faith of the tares. The characteristic of those who have the faith of the tares is that their will is weak. They say, "Let us just do this; let us just believe this way."

Let me give an example. Someone asks, "Granted that we have received the remission of sin by believing in the blood of the Cross, how do we solve the sins we commit from then on?" Then they answer that the sins committed from then on, too, Jesus Christ has already solved entirely. When one says that sin still remains in his heart and he feels uneasy, and asks what to do, they say, "Let us count all sins as having been removed."

They speak like this: "Jesus removed all sins on the Cross, so the sins we commit after believing have also all been removed. So let us not argue back and forth, but believe that they were all removed once and for all. Though there is sin in our hearts, and though the exact logic is not understood, let us count it as having been done." And so they pass over it.

Those who preach a false gospel are also tares

While preparing a book on the Tabernacle, I examined the meaning of the Tabernacle. To speak of the Tabernacle is to speak of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The garments of the priests, the coverings of the Tabernacle, its pillars, its gate and their colors—the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine

woven linen—in all these the gospel of the water and the Spirit is contained. The ephod artistically woven of gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen, and the band made in the same workmanship as the ephod, of gold thread and blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine woven linen—in all of it the truth of the water and the Spirit is contained.

But in doing such work, a person is easily tempted to take an easy way. He thinks: could I not just pick out and quote what is not wrong from what others have done, patch it together this way and that, and produce just one plausible book? A few people abroad have also written on the Tabernacle, so I consulted such materials and bought and read their books.

But among them there was no one who answered firmly, "This is exactly this." They only pass over it, saying, "It is probably something like this." Meanwhile, some, believing only in the blood of the Cross, testify to their church members that, since He remitted all sins once and for all by the shedding of the blood on the Cross, if we only believe, our sins are remitted.

Then, when asked, "What about the sins committed from then on?", they say that those sins too He bore entirely and was judged for on the Cross, and in the end they conclude, "Let us count it as having been done so." I have seen them carry on their words like that because their words get stuck.

Among those who believe only in the blood of the Cross and believe, "Jesus remitted all our sins on the Cross," there are many who are bound again by the sins they commit from then on. They knew and believed that all had been remitted on the Cross, and there was joy in their hearts; but afterward, as they commit sins, they experience sin piling up in their hearts and themselves being bound by sin.

This is something one experiences in the conscience. However much one knows and believes that all sins were

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remitted by the blood of the Cross, one's heart is not delivered from sin and does not become clean. So they ask their leaders and guides what to do at such times.

Then that guide says, "All sins were solved on the Cross, so know and believe that the sins committed from then on were also solved on the Cross. Let us believe so." That is their final answer. Then the one who asked also ends up saying, "There is no other way, so let us believe so."

Watching them do this, I come to know that this person is a tare. Why? Because if one truly knows and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he knows that even the sins we committed before believing in Jesus, Jesus bore entirely when He came to this earth and received baptism from John the Baptist at the Jordan River. At that time, by His receiving baptism once and for all, all sins were passed onto Jesus. So, carrying those sins, He received the judgment of sin on the Cross shedding His blood, and rose from the dead and became our living Savior.

Even all the sins we commit out of our lack and all the sins we commit out of weakness, the Lord bore entirely when He received baptism from John at the Jordan River. Our sins all passed onto Jesus at that time. We are now feeling and committing those sins at the present point of time, but on the Lord's side, He already bore those sins entirely by receiving baptism at the Jordan River. And by dying on the Cross He received the judgment of sin for us, and by rising from the dead He became the perfect Savior.

Though this is clear, I see them unable to explain it, and only concluding, "Let us believe that it has all been solved." This is like a doctor dealing with a patient. A patient has come again because he is in pain. Would not a true doctor examine him, know and explain exactly where and how he hurts and how the disease is progressing, give an exact prescription and present

medicine, or even operate if necessary? But if he says, “I have already cured you entirely, so even if it hurts, think of yourself as fully healed,” does that make sense? The one who makes people believe like that is a tare, and the person who believes like that becomes a servant of Satan.

Whenever people suffer because of their sins, we must clearly present the exact answer of the truth and tell them, “If you believe this, it is solved.” But the one who cannot present it and only says with a browbeating insistence, “Let us believe that it has all been solved,” is a tare. Such a one is not truly one of God’s people and is not wheat. The one who has preached such a false gospel is also a tare, and preaching the gospel like that is the work of a servant of Satan. We must discern this. It is not to slander anyone. Since the Lord said that an enemy has done this, we must discern those tares.

The wheat and the tares

Those of you who have farmed will know barnyard grass. When rice plants grow in the paddy, this thing called barnyard grass comes up together with them. Barnyard grass bears no grain. When it grows up, its stalk comes up deep green, just like the rice plant. When it grows a little more, it comes up even sturdier and greener than the rice.

When it comes up a little more, the rice ripens yellow, but the barnyard grass just keeps rising green and stout. It grows even taller than the rice, shooting up as if to say, “Follow me—I am the real thing.” But the rice, true to its name, forms full grain and bows its head, while the barnyard grass does not bow its head; it flowers, and its color is reddish, close to purple.

Inside that husk close to purple there seems to be some kind

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of fruit of its own, but there is almost no kernel. Only the husk comes up luxuriantly and it grows like sorghum. Barnyard grass looks statelier and sturdier than rice, but when you look at its fruit, there is no kernel and man cannot eat it. And when it falls, it comes up again the next year, and again and again.

When there is much barnyard grass, the other rice plants wither yellow. For the barnyard grass sucks up all the nourishment. The rice a master tends well grows green and fresh, but the paddy whose master only planted it and left, saying, “I am going to the city, so grow up well on your own; if there is barnyard grass beside you, do not let it take your nourishment and endure well,” is different.

When the master finishes his business and goes to such a paddy at harvest time, the barnyard grass has grown unexpectedly much. Though not more than the rice, clearly only rice was planted, yet when he goes later, there is so much that it has become a field of barnyard grass.

The barnyard grass grows up and presses down the grain from above. It blocks the light of the sun, and its roots entangle with theirs and suck up the nourishment. It is as if to say, “You just bear a little grain—I am the real thing.” So the master who farms pulls up the barnyard grass.

A skilled farmer recognizes barnyard grass even when it is young. Even one grown about ten or twenty centimeters he recognizes in passing. When it is young, the roots are not much entangled, so he pulls it out at once so that the rice is not harmed.

So we come to experience like this that people like tares were indeed tares. We come to feel: they looked so similar, but they were tares—and what is more, that person is under the rule of Satan the devil. And in this we realize that the wheat and the tares are truly different. Here the tares refer to that barnyard grass.

Even among the wheat there can be some that have only husks. They have failed to draw up nourishment properly, formed only husks, and withered yellow. There are also some whose kernels have not properly filled out, which say, "I too am wheat," but have formed much smaller than the others. Such ones, when threshed later, all fall away as broken grain. Even so, God regards all the wheat as precious.

But as long as one is wheat, barnyard grass is of no benefit at all. It is wholly harmful and useless. So He said that all such things are gathered up, bound, and burned. As we see and hear this word of the parable, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field,"* we come to think of the churches of this world.

We come to know that the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit is truly the wheat, and the person who does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a tare. Dear fellow believers, if we are not wheat but tares before God, what will our end be? Through this word we must know that, and turn and become those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In this word it is said clearly that the tares are first gathered and bound in bundles and burned. The reason the Lord keeps speaking this parable of the sower is to show that even among those who hang a cross inside a visible church, call on the name of Jesus, offer worship, and claim to believe in Jesus as the Savior, there are wheat and tares. Even if one is in such a church, if there is sin in his heart, he himself knows whether he is a tare or wheat. If he is a tare, even if it has been thirty or fifty years since he believed in Jesus, he must even now turn, truly believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and receive the remission of sin.

Many people of the world believe in Jesus, and within

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Christianity there are many who believe in Jesus. But the person who has not now been completely saved is a tare. Such a person is the same as one who does not yet believe.

We must know that the person who does not believe in Jesus as the Savior, and the person who says he believes in Jesus and yet believes there is sin in his heart, are in fact in the same state. Therefore even now one must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin.

We must be washed of all sins without even the last penny remaining

Our Lord spoke like this in Matthew 5:25–26: *"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny."*

Here He said to agree quickly with your adversary—the one who accuses you—while you are on the way with him. What does this mean? The one who accuses a person before God is Satan the devil and sin. If there is sin in one's heart, that sin accuses him before God. It accuses: "You have not yet received the remission of sin. You are still a sinner. You are one to be judged." Therefore He says to agree quickly while on the way together. It means to do it quickly while still living in this world. Receiving the remission of sin is never a thing to put off; it is a thing to be done quickly.

He said to beware lest that accuser deliver you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Dear fellow believers, if there is sin, one receives

the judgment for that sin. It is said that the wages of sin is death. Because there is sin, when that sin delivers us up before God, we receive judgment and are driven to hell. The sin of the heart drives a person to hell.

So at the last one is shut up in hell and suffers torment forever. Therefore we must keep in mind the word the Lord spoke in verse 26: *"Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny."* He said that until you have paid the last penny—that is, until even sin as small as a speck is paid without remainder—you can never come out of there. Then how can we be remitted of sin without even the last penny remaining? If we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we duly receive the remission of sin. We can be washed of all sins without even the last penny remaining.

If one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, not only that sin in the heart but even sins piled up like a mountain, even all the sins hiding behind him, are all remitted. It is through believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit that one receives the remission of sin.

Therefore you and I must examine whether we are wheat or tares before God. The Lord sowed good seed upon the visible church, and Satan the devil sowed the seed of the tares. We must now consider whether I am a tare or wheat. If there is still sin, we must believe the word of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin perfectly, without even the last penny remaining. This is what our Lord is saying.

However much one has believed in Jesus and been faithful, if there is even a penny's worth of sin in his heart, He said he is handed over to the judge. The wages of sin is death—that is judgment, eternal curse, and destruction. Knowing that if there is even the last penny of sin one goes to hell, one must know that he is a tare and clearly turn. Realizing, "I have been believing

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wrongly," he must even now become one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Some may say this: "Until now I did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but I hold conservative theology. And I have an experiential faith: when I prayed, I even heard God appear and speak, and I received power. Every time I prayed, and even in dreams, I met God many times, and I have received many experiences of prayer in my life. Yet because I did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, because a few personal sins remain, do you call me a tare? Though I did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, I can never give up my old faith." There can be people who speak like this.

But He said, *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field."* God has sown good seed in this world. That is, He has sown the gospel of the water and the Spirit. He has sown the seed of the gospel, the power of the gospel, by which anyone who only believes can receive the remission of sin.

The power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit removes people's sins clean, white as snow. It fulfills the word spoken in Isaiah 1:18: *"Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."* Yet there are people who do not believe this and think, "I will hold fast to my old faith. I only need to be sanctified a little more." But the Lord said that without paying the last penny one can never come out of there—that is, one cannot escape from hell. Therefore realize why the Lord spoke in parables like this, and even now believe just as it is the gospel of the truth of the water and the Spirit. The tare the Scriptures speak of is the person whose heart is bound by sin, the person who does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Only those born again of water and the Spirit enter the kingdom of God

We look at the word of John chapter 3. I preach this word because this truth must be delivered not only to you but to many people of the world. We look at John 3:1–5. *"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"*

The Lord said that unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. Unless one is born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God, and so he cannot see it. Then how is one born again? The Lord spoke like this in verse 5: *"Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."*

Jesus said that only when one is born of water and the Spirit—that is, born again—can one enter and see the kingdom of God. Therefore, even if one believes in Jesus, the person whose heart is still bound by sin is still a tare. The person who has even the last penny of sin in his heart is a tare, and is not a person who has been born again. Then how is a person born again? He said one is born again of water and the Spirit.

The water spoken of here refers to the word of God as well, but fundamentally it refers to Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, who came to this earth. It refers to God: Jesus Christ, in order to save man, was born on this earth as God become man, and when He was thirty years old, He had all the sins of mankind passed onto Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. And so, carrying all the sins of the world, He died on the Cross,

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rose from the dead, and saved us. That is, He is speaking of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

He said that one must be born again of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God; then what is the work the Holy Spirit does? The Holy Spirit testifies that our Lord came to this earth, bore the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, removing all our sins perfectly. Jesus is the One who accomplishes what God the Father planned. He is the One who accomplishes that work of being born on this earth, receiving baptism from John the Baptist, dying on the Cross, and rising from the dead to save us.

The Holy Spirit testifies that the Lord bore your sins and mine with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us. God testifies: "The Son of God has saved you with the water and the Spirit. He is God and your Savior; He received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved you. He bore your sins, and received the judgment of sin on the Cross shedding His blood, and saved you."

Therefore, when we know this truth through the word of God, the Holy Spirit testifies to it and confirms it. When we believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit testifies like this: "What you believe is right. You have no sin. Jesus Christ the Son of God came to this earth to bear your sins and received baptism from John, and therefore died on the Cross. His dying on the Cross was dying that death in place of your sins, and His receiving baptism from John the Baptist was to bear your sins. Jesus Christ rose again to give you new life, to make you a child of God again, and to have you live forever with God in the kingdom of God."

Because the Holy Spirit testifies like this, Jesus Himself said

that unless one is born again of water and the Spirit, one can neither enter nor see the kingdom of God.

The person who has even the last penny of sin in his heart is bound by sin again even after believing in Jesus, and though he repents of the sins he has committed and prays, the sin does not disappear. If, not having known the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he now comes to know it and believes, saying, "This is true. If I believe this, I receive the remission of sin," that is all he needs; but the person who does not believe this and holds fast to his old faith, regarding the gospel of the water and the Spirit as a mere small piece of knowledge to be added on top of his old knowledge, always has sin in his heart. When he sins, there is sin again; when he sins again, there is sin again.

But the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, though he is lacking, has no sin. For Jesus already bore the sins of mankind ahead of us. For Jesus came two thousand years ago and, taking our sins in advance, carried them away with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again and saved us.

Because one believes that, the one who believes in the remission of sin by faith has received the remission of sin, and the person who does not believe must believe even now. To those who already believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit this may be a plain word, but it is still worth hearing again. The Lord said that within the church that calls on the name of God and claims to believe in Jesus there are wheat and tares.

The wheat bears the fruit of wheat, and the tares bear the fruit of tares. The enemy sows tares and makes them bear the fruit of tares, and God sows good seed and makes the wheat still bear the fruit of wheat. Speaking this, He awakens us to the fact that we must surely believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This world is the field of the kingdom of God. It is a world

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in which God can work, a place where He can sow the seed of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If tares have appeared in the field of one's heart—that is, if a false gospel has been planted—one must learn and hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and know what gospel is now planted in the field of his own heart. Spiritually this field refers to a person's heart.

One must know whether truly good seed has been planted in the field of his heart, or the seed of the tares has been planted. What shows that tares have been planted is that there is sin in one's heart. That delusive gospel must be pulled out. One must boldly pull it out, saying, "This is a false gospel. It is similar to the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but it is false," and boldly believe the gospel of the truth of the water and the Spirit. In this world now there are many people who say they believe in Jesus and yet have a false gospel like a tare planted in their hearts.

And there are also many people in whom the gospel of the wheat, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, is planted. We are now preaching the gospel to the whole world. After the Lord rose again, He spoke like this to the disciples on the mountain in Galilee: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20).*

He said to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Our God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have sown good seed for us. That is, He has given us the gospel of the water and the Spirit and had us receive the remission of sin. Where does that appear? It appeared in that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born on this earth borrowing the body of Mary. God became man. To save man from sin, the Creator became a man.

So He came to this earth and had all the sins of mankind

passed onto Him by receiving baptism from John the Baptist. And He carried all those sins, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead and became our Savior.

In a word, Jesus bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John, received in our place the judgment of sin on the Cross and died, saving us completely from sin, and rose again and became the living Savior. And He said to preach this gospel to the whole world. Through this last will of Jesus also, we can know how important the baptism Jesus received from John is, and how important is the faith that believes that Jesus died on the Cross and rose from the dead and became our perfect Savior. We must also rightly know and believe how important is this faith that Jesus is the Son of God and the true God of the whole universe, our Master.

"There is now no condemnation to those who are in Jesus"

The Apostle Paul delivers this word in Romans chapter 8: *"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).*

Therefore there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. However much we have believed in Jesus, what matters is whether we are inside Jesus or outside Him. That is revealed by whether there is sin in the heart at present or not. What is more certain than what gospel one has believed is this: when one has committed sin, whether that sin grips his heart or not—that is, whether he is in Christ Jesus or not. By this one can

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know whether he is a tare or wheat.

The faith that enters into Christ Jesus is the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. For the gospel of the water and the Spirit removes perfectly even sin as small as the last penny. Now there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Since there is no sin there is no judgment, and since there is no sin one does not become a sinner but becomes righteous.

Condemnation is saying, "You have sin; you are a sinner." It is the same when one condemns oneself. To say, "Even after believing in Jesus Christ the Son of God as my Savior, there is sin in my heart; my faith has gone wrong," is condemnation. If one says, "I am a sinner," he is not a child of God but a tare.

There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus because the law of the Spirit of life has made us free from the law of sin and death. Then what is the law of sin and death? It is the Law. What condemns a person's sin, judges him, and drives him even to death is the Law. The Law points out and exposes a person's sin. It points out how much sin you have committed and what things are sin.

And what hands down God's just verdict—that if you have sin you go to hell—is the Law. Then what is the law of the Spirit of life? The law of the Spirit of life is the law by which God remits our sins, removes all our sins, causes us to be born again, and has us obtain new life. It is the law by which He removes our sins perfectly, makes us children of God, makes us people without sin, and has us obtain eternal life.

That is, it is the law of salvation and the law of the remission of sin. That law of the remission of sin is contained in the power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Looking at the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the Lord came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us. Therefore it is said that the law of the Spirit of life

has made us free from the law of sin and death.

As our people were freed from the chains of long oppression and delivered from the place of slavery, the law of the Spirit of life has freed us from the law of sin and death. We could only have lived forever as slaves of sin and death, but the Lord has freed us from that place of slavery. We must give thanks for that grace until the day this world ends.

The word that follows is this: *"For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3–4).*

What freed us from the law of sin and death, which arouses the wrath that the wages of sin is death, is the law of the Spirit of life. The righteous requirement of the Law, which teaches us that we have sin and drives us even to hell, the Son of God fulfilled. That is, the Son of God put on a human body and came to this earth and condemned the sins of us mankind in His own body. He had all our sins passed onto Him and condemned them in His own body.

Our sins all passed onto the head of Jesus Christ with the baptism He received from John. Jesus Christ came to this earth, bore all our sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, went to the Cross and received the judgment, saying, *"It is finished!"*, and rose from the dead and became perfectly our Savior.

The Lord has remitted all sins without leaving even one the size of the last penny. Therefore the person who wants to become wheat must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even if for two thousand years people did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believed only in the blood of the

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Cross, they must now believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become wheat

What did the Lord say? He said that while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares. While men slept refers to the time when people did not know the gospel of the water and the Spirit. At that time Satan the devil made his servants sow the false gospel of the tares. What is it? It is the gospel that believes only in the blood of the Cross.

Therefore we must clearly preach the gospel that brings the sinner's soul fully to life. As a true doctor exactly examines and heals a soul sick with sin, we must have that sin washed away clean by the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross so that the person receives the remission of sin, and we must clearly proclaim to him, "Now you are righteous forever." The one who preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit is the one who does that very work.

People do not easily grasp this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and so it is truly hard. But Jesus has left us on this earth to wait for the souls who have not yet understood and to have us preach the gospel to them. Therefore we must be patient and wait for them.

Now in the whole world there are many tares, and there are many who believe the gospel of the tares. We must pray for these souls. We earnestly ask that the gospel of the water and the Spirit may be preached to them also, so that they may turn, believe this gospel of the truth, and receive salvation. If anyone still has sin in his heart, I pray in the name of the Lord that he may even now

believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sin without even the last penny remaining, and become true wheat. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The faith of those who sell all that they have and buy the hidden treasure

< Matthew 13:44-46 >

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

Dear fellow believers, are you at peace? The last full day is already here. When this one day passes, tomorrow morning we will hold the Communion and then return home. I cannot tell you how fine the weather is. It seems we have already entered early autumn. The grass insects and the cicadas are singing, and the temperature differs between midday and evening, so it is truly pleasant. It is so good that our country has four seasons. I feel that God is working like this and governing the whole world, and I am so thankful.

During this one week, the coworkers, the brothers and sisters, and the workers have met and spent time together, and it has been so good. We shared delicious food in the dining hall, were richly served for a week, and had fellowship together, so the stress of our hearts was much relieved and we were truly

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thankful. While living on this earth, I always have the heart to carry out well at least the work entrusted to me before I go. Above all, we are receiving much of God's help and doing well, so I can only give thanks.

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field

This midday we will read only three verses, verses 44 to 46. Looking at today's passage, it is written like this: *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44).* The Lord explained the kingdom of heaven to us by comparing it to treasure hidden in a field.

The meaning of this word is as follows. The kingdom of heaven speaks of the kingdom of God. The hidden treasure speaks of the most precious thing on this earth. That most precious treasure is discovering the kingdom of God. Discovering, while living on this earth, the way to enter the kingdom of God is like discovering the greatest treasure.

To possess the kingdom of heaven one must pay the price

Therefore He said that the man, after finding it, hid it, and for joy went and sold all that he had and bought that field. In verses 44 to 46 the Lord told us that the person who wants to possess the kingdom of heaven must pay the corresponding price.

What is like this treasure, which enables us to enter the

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kingdom of God, is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. If one discovers this gospel and wants to make it his own, he must sell all that he has and buy it. Only by paying the price like that can he make this gospel his own. You and I discovered the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and through it we discovered the kingdom of God and came to enter that kingdom.

What brings us into the kingdom of God is the power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The power of the gospel of the water and the Spirit has remitted our sins perfectly, once and for all. Jesus received baptism from John and took on all the sins of the world, received the judgment on the Cross shedding His blood and dying, and rose from the dead in three days, completing our salvation. So through this gospel we have come to enter the kingdom of God.

The word of the passage says that the man, after finding the treasure, hid it, and for joy sold all that he had and bought it. But if one discovers the gospel of the water and the Spirit and it simply ends there, that treasure is still another's. Someone else may take it. If one wants to discover and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sin, keep this faith, and enter even into the kingdom of heaven, he comes to pay the corresponding price.

Of course, it is not that we enter the kingdom of heaven by paying a price. We enter by faith. But what the Lord means in today's passage is that those who discovered the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which is like that treasure that brings one into the kingdom of heaven, sold all that they had and bought it, made it their own, and finally entered the kingdom of heaven.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is that very treasure

When we meet the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must pay the price when we believe it, receive the remission of sin, and try to follow and spread this gospel. As the passage says that he sold all that he had, so it is with us. There is not one person on this earth who, after meeting the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made this gospel his own without selling all that he had.

After you discover the gospel of the water and the Spirit, you must sell all that you have and regard this as the most valuable thing. Even if I lose anything of this earth because of this gospel, even if I lose everything I have, you must know its value, regarding this gospel of the water and the Spirit as more precious than all that I have on this earth. If one does not know and does not feel its value, that person may even lose that treasure.

If one truly knows that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is precious, then whatever price he must pay, he surely makes that gospel his own, believes and follows it, and by possessing it enters the kingdom of God. This is exactly what this passage is saying.

That is why He said the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. In a field a jewel box full of diamonds, gold, silver, and precious stones was hidden, and the man who found it went at once and sold his whole fortune and bought that field. For if he buys that field, the treasure in it becomes his. He sold all that he had and barely bought it. He did not buy it with plenty left over for himself.

Facing the word of God and looking at the state of heart of you who have this gospel, I think about this. I want to tell you how much we had to sell everything to buy this gospel of the

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water and the Spirit—by which Jesus received baptism from John and had the sin of the world passed onto Him, received the judgment for all our sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and completed our salvation—and how precious this is, its true value. I want to tell you how much this truth of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we know is worth.

Whether this is merely some religious doctrine of the world, or whether it is something worth buying even if I lose my life, my house, my property, my parents, my wife, my children, and everything—how much this gospel of the water and the Spirit is worth—I want to ask that of myself and speak of it to you.

Only the gospel of the water and the Spirit leads to the kingdom of heaven

This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth by which one can enter the kingdom of heaven. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the truth of salvation. It is the truth by which one can be saved. By believing anything other than this gospel of the water and the Spirit, one can never enter the kingdom of heaven. One can never enter the kingdom of God. The person who claims to enter the kingdom of heaven without believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a robber, and is also a tare.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is worth this much because it brings us into the kingdom of God. This is the treasure. What is the most precious thing on this earth and in heaven? What is the most precious thing to you and me? It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. And the Owner of that gospel of the water and the Spirit is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Only the person who knows its value sells all that he has and buys it

Therefore what matters is whether one knows this value. It is whether one knows the value of this gospel of which the Lord is now speaking to the disciples in this parable. The person who knows the value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit sells all that he has and buys it. But the person who does not know its value does not sell all that he has; he tries to buy it, and when it does not go well, he just gives up.

Dear fellow believers, receiving the remission of sin and believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not something that just happens any old way. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is clearly the truth, and this is fact. This is an immense treasure. It is so precious that it could not be bought even by selling everything on this earth. But if one does not know the value of this gospel, one does not buy it. He does not buy it even at the cost of all he has; he only looks at what is displayed in the showcase and does not make it his own. Such a person merely knows the gospel; he has not received salvation.

This gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus received baptism from John and had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, and received the judgment for those sins on the Cross and saved us—is truly blessed if we only buy it, even by selling all that we have. It is worth that much. So I tell you quietly: buy it. Believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit that brings you into the kingdom of heaven. Whatever price of sacrifice there may be, believe it. And hold on to it. Believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and make it your own, and to keep it, whatever price of sacrifice there may be, keep that faith, follow it, and unite with it.

The Lord spoke this to the disciples. He said the kingdom of

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heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. Even if we pour out all our youth and lose everything in believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if we know that this gospel is truly life, that this gospel has removed our sins, and that it is such a precious gospel that when we preach it people receive the remission of sin and enter the kingdom of God together, then we can follow it even by selling all that we have. But if one does not know its value, he does not sell all that he has to buy it. As a result he neither receives salvation nor keeps the precious thing—he loses it.

This is not a word telling you to sell your property. How much property do you have? Compared with the kingdom of God it is truly a trifle. So do not misunderstand it as a word to sell your property and bring it. What you have does not amount even to the price of one meal before the kingdom of God. But we who are born again are people who can lay down all of it for this gospel.

Yet those who do not know this value do not buy it. They leave what is theirs as it is; they know the gospel and know it is precious, but they do not actually follow it. There are people who, even after meeting the gospel of the water and the Spirit, calculate and hesitate and play tug-of-war over whether to follow it, whether to believe it, whether to unite with it. When I see such people, it is truly regrettable.

In Korea there are truly many people who do not know the precious value of this gospel of the water and the Spirit. So there are times when my heart is heavy. I even come to think that this gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be handed out carelessly to a person who will not devote his whole life and sell all his possessions to buy it. But throughout the world there are also truly many people who stake their lives on this.

There are many souls who say that if they can only enter the

kingdom of God, if they can only receive the remission of sin, if they can only live the life of righteousness and live united with the Lord, they will pay the price even by selling everything. That is why we do overseas missions. It is because God has told us to preach the gospel to the whole world. It is because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is a treasure worth that much.

Dear fellow believers, suppose there were a box on this pulpit, and when it was opened, it was full of diamonds of who knows how many carats, giving off a mysterious brilliance, with a crown of diamonds and all kinds of jewels inside. If you could buy this by selling all that you have, would you sell or not? You would sell. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is worth exactly this much. Our brothers and sisters, will you buy it or not?

The person who knows the value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit—by which Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, and was nailed to the Cross and died, washing away our sins completely—will rush to buy it even by selling all that he has. I know this value. I know how precious the power of this gospel of the water and the Spirit is. And I believe that you also know this value. I believe you are here together because you know it.

If you only know that this is more precious than what you have, will you invest everything you have in this or not? Will you buy it or not? Truly the gospel of the water and the Spirit is like this. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.

The man who sold everything to buy the treasure hidden in a field

He dug at one corner of a shabby field, and a wooden box

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came out. When he picked the lock and opened it, it was full of treasure, dazzling to the eyes. The man covered the box again, put the earth back as it was, went home, and sold everything he had—his house, his factory, his land, even his clothes. He hurriedly disposed of everything, even cutting the price for anyone who would buy in one lot.

When he had sold it all, it came to three billion won. Carrying that money, he went to the owner of the field. Making the excuse that he wanted to build a villa, he speaks humbly: excuse me, but if you sell me that field, I will pay you a generous price corresponding to it. Please sell it to me.

But when the bargaining began, this man, in his impatience, ended up offering one billion from the start. It was a field worth only thirty million won at the market price. The owner of the field thinks it strange, supposes there must be something great in this land, and holds out. He balks, saying he cannot sell land handed down from his ancestors. Then this man raises the price to one and a half billion, one billion seven hundred million, up to two billion. The owner becomes still more suspicious and does not sell.

This man is so anxious he cannot bear it. That night he even considers stealing it in secret. But knowing that if he fails even once in ten thousand, all that treasure will fly away, he restrains himself. The next day he calms his heart again and visits, apologizes for the discourtesy of the day before, shares human warmth, and begins to bargain again. Though it is land your parents handed down, he persuades, if it is used for a good purpose, would they not understand even from under the ground?

The owner of the field hardly budges. Even when it goes up to two billion two hundred million, to two billion eight hundred million, he does not sell. Finally, when asked how much he would sell it for, he says he will sell for three billion. That was

exactly this man's entire fortune. In the end he carted over the entire three billion and bought that field.

This is exactly how much it is worth. It is worth buying by selling one's whole fortune. It is worth buying even if one loses his life. The value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit is this great. Dear fellow believers, this gospel is so enormous that as I read this word I do not know how to express it all. This gospel you and I have heard and believed has such an immense value. This gospel, which is worth possessing all that is in the kingdom of heaven, is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Because this gospel of the water and the Spirit is so valuable, we buy it and make it our own even by selling all we have. To buy all that treasure we sold everything of ours, and finally received salvation. Dear fellow believers, is it not so?

But there are also many who bought it without selling everything. Such a person can lose this at any time. He may even throw it away according to his circumstances. But the person who bought it by putting in all that he had can never lose it. For he has staked his life on it. On the other hand, the person who did not sell everything of his to buy it—that is, the person who has not wholly believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit—can throw it away at any time according to his circumstances.

The power and truth of this gospel by which Jesus saved us from sin with the baptism He received from John and the Cross—that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit—is worth buying even at the cost of one's life. It is worth believing. By this we obtain new life, and we can go to the kingdom of heaven and obtain all the treasures in the kingdom of God.

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The soul more precious than the whole world, the gospel more precious than life

When I see people hesitating over something so precious—whether to believe or not, and even after believing, whether to follow or not—it is truly regrettable. The soul you and I have is a life so valuable that it cannot be exchanged even for the whole world. We humans are beings made in the image of God, and so we are beings who will live forever. We are those who will live forever like God, becoming children of God and enjoying riches and glory forever. Man has that much value.

The Lord said, *"A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, Is like the beasts that perish" (Psalm 49:20)* The person who does not know the value of his own being, the value of his own honor, is like the beasts that perish. How honorable are we?

Why do the bereaved weep so sorrowfully when a person dies and the body is carried out and departs? Because once one goes, he does not return to this world again. Whether we meet in the kingdom of God or meet in hell, he can never return to this world again. That is why it is so sad. That is how precious one life is.

Those who hesitate, not knowing the value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

There are people who do not know the value of this gospel of the water and the Spirit and are still wavering over whether to believe. Though everything has been shown to them—not only the diamonds on top but every kind of jewel underneath, all of it—there are people who doubt, wondering whether all this will

really become theirs. They are people who cannot make the decision and keep hesitating.

There are also many who wonder whether they are being deceived, and fail to see its value at all. This is like seeing only the state of the earth covering the treasure box, and failing to see the light leaking out from that box. Such a person is one who has not yet seen how precious the gospel of the water and the Spirit is.

Then again, there are people who do not buy it but follow the box around every day, only clinging to it. They only say, do not sell it, for I will buy it someday. Though the owner says he will sell it if they sell all they have and bring it, they do not buy now and only say they will buy someday. When I see such people, it is truly frustrating. They do not know the precious thing to be precious, and my heart aches for them.

The Lord said that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, and that the man who found it went back and sold all that he had and bought that field. He said the price was paid. For a precious thing, the price must be paid. We must know and believe with all our heart, with all our strength, and with all our life the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus received baptism from John and took on the sin of the world, and received the judgment for our sins on the Cross, completing our salvation. We must know and believe it as what gives us new life, as what removes all our sins and makes us children of God.

Dear fellow believers, even within the church there are people who regard the gospel of the water and the Spirit as simply the same as other gospels. But a pseudo gospel only puts forward the word gospel. Whenever they open their mouths they speak of evangelization movements and gospel movements and only tell people to bring others in. That is not the gospel. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is the true gospel. Believing

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only in the blood of the Cross is not the gospel but merely a religion.

Therefore, even if you lose everything you have, if you believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit you will gain more and receive more blessing. Realize this fact and the value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and believe it with your heart. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

The merchant who buys the one pearl of great price

Now let us read verses 45 and 46. *"'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."* This time He compared the kingdom of heaven to a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. He said that when he found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought that pearl. This too is the same word as the parable before it.

If the former parable is the word that one knew the value of the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believed it whatever sacrifice followed, this parable is the word that one paid the price to keep what he believed of that gospel. It is the story after one has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The merchant who met one very good pearl came back and sold everything he had. He sold all the worthless pearls, his house and his fields, and if that was not enough, he laid down even his life, and bought that one precious pearl. He sold everything to buy that one pearl. This pearl speaks of the perseverance of faith.

A pearl is formed inside an oyster. When the flesh of the oyster is wounded or a stone lodges in it, the oyster, to wrap it,

brings out fluid from its own body and lays it over it, layer upon layer, over a long time. Through such a long time of endurance it finally becomes a pearl. Our faith is also like this.

The perseverance that pays the price to keep the faith

He said the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls. If we have met and believed this gospel, if we have bought this gospel even by selling all that we have, then whatever price of sacrifice follows in keeping this gospel, we keep it with all our life. Even if we lose everything, we pay the price so as not to lose this precious thing.

Dear fellow believers, having a precious thing is precious, but if you have it, you must keep it, manage it well, and enjoy all the benefits that come from it. For that, you must pay a great price, the price of sacrifice.

Some people place a very heavy safe in their house, and from the time the house is built they connect the safe to reinforcing bars and fix it firmly in concrete. They prepare it so that no one can carry it off without tearing down the whole house, and so that it can never be opened without the key. And they keep rare treasures in it. If we have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we must know it is precious and keep it that thoroughly. To keep it we must also pay the price of sacrifice. While preaching the gospel to the whole world, we must guard it through and through so that this gospel is not corrupted.

Dear fellow believers, there are people who corrupt this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and there are people who know its value far too little. They do so because they do not know. If they knew, they would not do so. So we must know this

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value rightly. This is a treasure that cannot be exchanged for any other jewel brought in its place. In this box there are pearls, jewels, and gold pieces, all of them. It cannot be exchanged for anything in this world. God has given it, and if we only believe this and go forward before the Lord, we obtain what is greater and more immense than this.

We preach and keep the gospel of the water and the Spirit at the risk of our lives

As a merchant, if he really knows the value of that pearl, sells everything to buy it, so we, after believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if we know the value of this gospel, give our all to keeping and spreading it. We do it at the risk of our lives. It is not something done briefly, as if disposable; it is done investing everything, staking one's life on it.

Once, passing in front of a restaurant, I saw a banner hung on the wall. On it was written, "I have staked my life on this food." Passing in front of it, I could not help going in and tasting that food. When someone says he has staked his life on it, how could one say it has no taste? I like such people. Whatever work a person does, if he works staking his life on it, even if he is a person who makes food, I respect such a person.

Truly, as we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit like this, we are preaching the gospel really staking our lives, staking our whole existence on it. I want to do this work. I want to keep this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Even the words "I want to keep it" are not enough. Because it is the work of giving new life to souls and saving them from destruction, it is a work worth doing even if we die. Even if we should die doing this work, it is worth doing. It is a work worth staking our lives on. So there

is never any quitting because some change arises while doing it. It is a work of such value, and also a work that requires perseverance.

To meet, believe, and follow this gospel of the water and the Spirit requires perseverance. We must endure. The way of following the Lord is not so easy, and the work of serving the gospel is not so easy. Enduring and persevering, as the man sold all that he had and bought it, we must serve with our lives as the pledge, enduring until we go to the Lord's kingdom. That is what the Lord has spoken to us.

Though we are not many in number, we preach the gospel toward the whole world. We will do a hundred times, a thousand times, ten thousand times more work in the future than we have done until now. But this work is not done with the body alone. If we worked with the body alone, we would collapse exhausted after working all day. In fact, it is faith we use more. We use faith more and exert ourselves more. The One who accomplishes is the Lord.

We are God's people who have faith like a treasure

I am so happy. I am happy to be able to do this work together with you. I have met this gospel of the water and the Spirit and become such a happy person. You also have met the gospel of the water and the Spirit and become such happy people. It may seem we met it by chance, but in fact we have met and gained a precious treasure. So we are so happy.

In this world there are many pastors and many people who claim to believe in Jesus. But how can we, who have the gospel of the water and the Spirit, be compared with hirelings and those like tares? We must make clear that what is precious is precious,

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and clearly discern that what is vain is vain.

Even if someone speaks of another gospel that looks similar to this gospel of the water and the Spirit, it does not work on us. This gospel of the water and the Spirit that we have is the gospel of salvation accomplished through the baptism Jesus received from John and the work of the Cross, revealed in the Scriptures. This gospel is not a doctrine that came out of man's head. Therefore no honor, no temptation, nothing whatsoever can take us away from this love that is in Christ.

We are God's people. We are God's workers, those who have faith like a treasure. In the light of that faith and that truth God has given us, the pride we set up is rather nothing but a feeble thing. But for the gospel of the water and the Spirit we can gladly break our pride and bow our heads. How can a person who has not received the remission of sin, a person who believes a false gospel, be compared with us? Nothing can sever us from the love that is in Christ. We give thanks before God. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Keep the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit to the end

< Matthew 13:44-50 >

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Our Lord spoke of the kingdom of heaven by comparing it to treasure hidden in a field. *"'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44)* If we discover this kingdom of heaven that comes upon our hearts through the remission of sin, how glad and joyful our hearts would be!

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The kingdom of heaven like treasure hidden in a field

If we really discover this heavenly kingdom God has given us, how glad and joyful our hearts would be! God has prepared the heavenly kingdom for us. And He has given us this remission of sin. He has given us this gospel of the remission of sin that makes us God's people, the truth of being remitted of sin. When we discover this truth, our hearts are truly glad and joyful. From the time we come to know this gospel of the truth, the kingdom of heaven is established in our hearts. As a man discovers treasure hidden in a field, so the Lord is speaking of our discovering this gospel.

A certain man wanted to buy a field. While he went to buy that field, made inquiries, and looked around here and there, he discovered the fact that in the ground in the middle of the field he wanted to buy there was treasure. This man discovered a fact the original owner did not know. How thoroughly would this man have checked it? He dug the ground to see whether there was a jar of diamonds in it, or whether veins of gold lay under the soil of that field. In any case, this man discovered the fact that there was treasure in that field. And he came back and told the owner he would buy that field. The price was high, but this man, who knew that treasure was hidden in the field he meant to buy, sold his whole fortune—everything he had—to buy that field, and bought it.

This is exactly the gospel. The Lord has remitted all the sins of you and me. Our sins have truly disappeared, white as snow. The Lord had all our sins passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment on the Cross, and rose again three days after He died, becoming the Savior of those who believe. And so the Lord has saved us. When we discovered

this gospel, we sold all that we had. Whatever sacrifice may follow, the man who has found the treasure hidden in the field is the man who has found this true gospel, and so he sold everything he had, took this gospel of the water and the Spirit, this treasure, as his own, and believed it.

The gospel given freely, yet which not just anyone can buy

Dear fellow believers, this gospel of the water and the Spirit is like this treasure. This gospel is not something just anyone can buy. It is true that God gives us the gospel of the water and the Spirit freely. But without giving all your strength, without counting the fact that if you truly believe this you will lose many things, you cannot buy this gospel. In fact, if you believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is also very much you lose. You may lose friends, sometimes lose the honor of the world, and sometimes lose possessions. Even so, only the person who believes like this—"The Lord came to this earth for my sins, had all my sins passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John, and died shedding His blood on the Cross, saving me from all sins with the water, the blood, and the Spirit. I will still believe this fact, that the Lord has remitted my sins"—received this remission of sin and could buy this treasure hidden in the field. This is what the Lord is saying.

Dear fellow believers, when they meet the Lord, many people are like land speculators going around to buy fields. They calculate: if I buy this land, will I profit or lose? Shall I buy it or not? Seen that way, all people are merchants. Now some fields do not matter whether one buys them or not. Even if something is left over, it is not much. But some fields are worth buying by

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investing everything one has gained in all his trading. If only that treasure hidden in the middle of that field is there, even if he gives all he has and loses all, if he only gains that, it cannot be compared with the fortune he has. Because it is so precious and valuable, he comes to gain a treasure that simply cannot be converted into figures.

The treasure bought with all one's heart

This treasure is the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit that you and I believe, the gospel that has completely remitted our sins. This gospel is the treasure. Everyone who discovered the gospel of the truth sold everything he had and bought it. Dear fellow believers, is it so? Those who have received the remission of sin did so. They sold everything they had and bought it.

I also, long ago, discovered this gospel of the truth and sold everything. I did not sell property; I sold everything I had. The learning I had acquired, my friends, my acquaintances, honor, wealth, knowledge—I sold all of it entirely and bought this gospel. Thinking that if this one thing became mine it would be good even if I lost everything else, I sold everything and bought this gospel. Because this is the truth. I believe that this gospel I have is a treasure. And I believe that this faith you have is the faith of the treasure.

This gospel of the water and the Spirit cannot be bought with money, whatever one brings from this world. It is only what God has given us by grace. God, in order to give this grace, asks whether we believe and know that this is truly precious.

There may be some who think they just happened to receive the remission of sin, and ask whether this is really so precious.

There may be some who, thinking it a remission of sin that everyone receives in passing, ask why this is called so precious—those who, even after receiving the remission of sin, do not know that this truth they have is precious and regard it lightly. But dear fellow believers, if you think that way, it is taken from you. If things go wrong, the devil comes and steals it away, or someone says, "You have something truly precious," pays a price, and buys it away. If one throws it away himself, he is finished.

Dear fellow believers, it is truly precious. That the Lord has remitted the sins of you and me is precious. That He has washed all our sins clean with the water, the blood, and the Spirit—with the blue, purple, and scarlet thread—and made us righteous, and made us glorious sons of God, is precious. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? We are those who have bought a precious treasure. We discovered a precious treasure, sold everything we had, bought this precious treasure, and made it ours.

When it is said there is a precious treasure in the world, people sell everything to buy it. Suppose some great businessman went into a distant jungle region, and while surveying a wide stretch of land, discovered that in one part of it diamonds and a gold mine were buried. If what is buried there is truly inexhaustible, he will go to the owner and bargain to buy that field, even by selling his whole fortune. The person who knows the value of the treasure invests his whole fortune and buys it. But the person who does not well know the value of the treasure, the timid person who fears he may be deceived, cannot buy it. Though inexhaustible treasure is in it, he is afraid of selling his whole fortune to buy it, and cannot. But the person who can recognize true treasure and knows its value, after investigating precisely and confirming again, sells everything in his house, whatever it takes, and buys it in the end.

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The Lord is saying that this gospel of the remission of sin the Lord gives can likewise be bought only by giving one's all. One believes it by selling everything he has. Without the faith that believes one hundred percent, this treasure does not become one's own. The person who, with a doubting heart, does not even confirm it for himself cannot obtain this gospel of the water and the Spirit even when he meets it. Those who gained the treasure bought it by putting in everything they had. We did not actually sell property, but with our whole hearts, with all our devotion, we received this gospel into our hearts. Dear fellow believers, is it so?

If you have anxieties, pray

Now is the last age of this world, so there are times when your hearts are anxious. Then what must we do when we are anxious? We need only pray. The devil blackmails and threatens us. What the devil hates most is prayer. When we pray, God hears and works. But the devil ceaselessly gives us anxieties. Therefore, dear fellow believers, gather together and pray. The Scriptures say: *"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6–7)* God takes charge of everything we worry about and think about in our hearts, and solves it all.

Dear fellow believers, if you are anxious, pray. Anxiety is a signal to pray. The devil gives anxiety to try to ruin us, but we have the treasure. Our Lord is in our hearts. "Lord, I am uneasy. I am anxious. Do this for me, and keep that for me. Lord, grant it." We tell Him like this. In the kingdom of God, the person who

empties his heart and asks for grace receives grace. God likes best the person who asks freely, without merit.

Because God is the God of mercy and the God of grace, He likes best the person who empties his heart and humbly asks. Dear fellow believers, God is most pleased with children who simply ask, though they have deposited nothing with Him. On the contrary, God is not pleased with the person who is so excessively polite as to say, "God, I have deposited nothing with You, so how could I ask? I will handle this matter myself; just watch over me," and tries to solve it by himself. God grieves, saying, "You do not know the fact that I am the God of mercy." The Scriptures said to pray without ceasing: *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).*

If you are anxious, pray even while you work, and if your heart is still not at ease, set the work down for a moment, go to one side, and truly with all your heart pray, "Lord, there is this matter. Lord, solve it for me." When we pray, God surely answers. When you are uneasy, pray. And request prayer. If you cannot do it well yourself, let the one who is young in faith request prayer from those who have gone ahead in faith, and request prayer from the church. You must not try to live by your own strength alone without even making the request.

"'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44) This is a word spoken concerning those who have received the remission of sin. Dear fellow believers, receive the remission of sin. Have you received the remission of sin? Have you bought this treasure? If you lost everything and bought this, you are a truly blessed person. Before long the treasure of that field will make you glorious. For the person who has bought the treasure

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of this field, only glory remains. When we remove the dregs of the heart within our flesh and pile up, one by one, only the faith that truly believes, when this faith becomes whole, we come to enjoy glory.

The pearl of salvation the Lord Himself made

Now let us look at the second parable. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:45–46)* He said that the pearl merchant, when he met one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought that pearl.

Dear fellow believers, a pearl is something that is made. When God created the heavens and the earth, He also made the jewels. But this pearl did not come into being by His saying, "Let there be a pearl." Jewels and pearls grow and are made. In particular, a pearl is made inside an oyster. When sand or a stone lodges in the flesh of the oyster and wounds it, because of that pain the oyster brings out fluid and wraps that foreign matter. As a person's mouth waters much when it is sore inside, the oyster brings out fluid to endure that pain. That fluid coats it and coats it again, piling up and growing—this is the pearl. A pearl is made like this, out of the oyster's pain and fluid.

Dear fellow believers, this pearl of greatest price speaks of what our Lord did to save us. It speaks of this saving work of Jesus Christ, who came to us with the water, the blood, and the Spirit. The Lord made countless promises in history in order to come to this earth. He said through Moses that He would come like this, spoke through the servants of God, and spoke countless times through many events. And when the time came, He came

Himself.

He came in the flesh, received baptism from John and had all the sins of man passed onto Him, and died shedding His blood on the Cross. This salvation of the Lord is not like what came into being simply by His saying, "Let there be," when He created the heavens and the earth. God made this Himself, with His own body. As a pearl is made with pain and fluid, the Lord Himself became man and made this salvation to save man. With the water, the blood, and the Spirit, over thirty-three years, He made this pearl. The most precious pearl among pearls is the pearl of the baptism Jesus received from John and of being born again—that is, the pearl of the remission of sin and of being born again.

What the Lord did when He came to this earth is the most valuable work in this world. What is the most valuable work in heaven and on earth? It is that God became man, had all the sins of man passed onto Him through the baptism He received from John, bore all those sins, went to the Cross and received the judgment, making all people righteous and delivering them from sin. This work is the most valuable work in this world, the most valuable pearl. What is the most valuable pearl? It is this gospel. It is the gospel of the remission of sin the Lord has given us. This is something that was made.

What the Lord did when He came to this earth—His being born, His receiving baptism from John, His dying on the Cross, and all the things He spoke—do you believe them? This is the pearl. The most valuable work our Lord has done for us. That was the remission of the sins of you and me. It was the work of our Lord removing the sin of this world. By believing what the Lord did, we have received the remission of sin.

He called it the pearl of greatest price, yet some people think of this pearl as just an ordinary pearl. But this is not a pearl of the world. This gospel is not the salvation of some religion of

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the world. It is the salvation the Lord Himself made. Yet some people underestimate it far too much and regard it lightly. He said the merchant bought the pearl of greatest price, the best pearl—what is that best pearl? It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the gospel of the remission of sin. Where is there a better pearl than this? Where is there a work more precious than this work, in which our Lord came to this earth and removed all our sins with the water, the blood, and the Spirit and saved us? If there is a work more beautiful than this work—in which our Lord, to remove our sins, came to this earth, received baptism from John the Baptist, bore all sin, and received the judgment for all sins on the Cross and saved us—tell me. If there were such a work, I would throw away this pearl and buy that pearl. Dear fellow believers, is there such a work?

The Lord came to this earth putting on the flesh to save us, received baptism from John and took on all our sins, and was nailed to the Cross in our place and shed His blood, receiving all the judgment. And so, through these three things, He has given us the remission of sin. This is the pearl of greatest price.

The good fish and the bad fish in the net

Now let us look at the third parable. *"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:47–50)* Here He said there are good and bad, and that the wicked are separated from among the just.

That He said the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet speaks of the church. God has given the church on this earth, and through the church He has had this precious pearl and precious treasure offered to people. He has had it openly presented and sold. To those who sell all that they have and buy it, He has given it. By buying this treasure and this pearl by faith, they came into the net—that is, into the church. But though they have come into the net, there are good fish and there are bad fish. What is it that the wicked are separated out from among the just? They certainly did come into the net, into the church.

He said the bad fish are thrown away. What is a bad fish? It is selling everything one has to buy this precious pearl and precious treasure and keeping it, and then throwing it away. It is throwing away this precious thing, saying something else is better. What is bad is believing this and having received salvation by it, and yet not preaching it. Not only not preaching it, but even throwing it away oneself. Saying, how many pearls are better than this, and throwing away the pearl one has.

Dear fellow believers, the merchant who bought the field and bought the pearl lives happily forever afterward, even without doing business. With only what is in it he lives forever. But these bad ones threw away the eternal things of the heavenly kingdom and took the things on earth. Though they had this gospel of the remission of sin, though they met and bought such a precious pearl, afterward they corrupt this precious pearl and sell it off at a bargain price. They corrupt the precious pearl into a middling pearl and sell it, seeking merely to eat well and live well on this earth.

Jesus solved all sins with the baptism He received from John and the Cross. And so these days, when we preach the gospel, people sometimes receive the remission of sin once and for all. Preaching the gospel, we ask, “Jesus bore all sins with the

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baptism He received from John and received the judgment of all sins hanging on the Cross—it is all finished. Do you believe? Is there anything left for you to be judged for?" Yet some do not properly show this precious pearl, this precious treasure, but sell it off cheap, saying, "Just believe; just bring a small offering." This is what is bad. He said that on the last day He will take this bad thing out of the net, that is, out of the church, and throw it into the furnace of fire.

"Which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matthew 13:48–50) The furnace of fire here speaks of a fire kindled and boiling up like the blast furnace that melts iron at a steel mill. That is, it speaks of the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. What is the bad? It is those who, though they met the pearl of greatest price within God's church and received salvation, do not call that pearl of greatest price a precious pearl but sell it off at a very cheap price. When the Lord looks, such ones are the worst. The Lord came to this earth and saved us with the water, the blood, and the Spirit, yet they deny the baptism Jesus received from John and leave the baptism out. They have no confidence because they do not know the original text.

"For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness"

When they are asked where the record of Jesus receiving baptism from John is, they hem and haw. But it is clearly written in the Scriptures. When Jesus received baptism from John, He

said this: *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. The word *"thus"* here means that not by any other method but exactly by this method—by this method of Jesus receiving baptism from John—accomplishing our salvation is most just and fitting. It means it is fitting to make us sinless.

If the remission of sin were something accomplished by just any method, it would have been written that it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness by any method. But since He said *"thus,"* this method is the only one there is. In the Bible expressed in Korean there is *"thus,"* and in the original Greek it is likewise written. It means there is no other way. Yet some people fear this and hem and haw. And though they have believed this and received the remission of sin, when they preach they corrupt it as they preach it. They say only that they were saved by the blood of the Cross, and ask why Jesus, being God, would need to receive baptism.

But would that be the same pearl? Is something with pebbles mixed into the pearl a pearl? A pearl is a pure pearl only when it has been built up by the pure fluid that comes from within the oyster. What our Lord did for us, coming to this earth in the form of man, is this pure pearl. The Lord did not save us with a mere word. To make us—creatures—into children of God, the Lord had to become a creature Himself.

The Creator Himself became man for us, and as man He bore all the sins of man with the water, the blood, and the Spirit, and by doing that work He saved us. Therefore in this is contained the love of God, and in this is contained the heart of God. To make His own children, He mixed in His own blood, and He put His own labor into it. All the things of the world came into being by His saying, "Let there be." We too were formed of dust. But to make one born-again person, one child of His own, God

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Himself suffered pain for us, as a mother suffers the pains of childbirth. He came to this earth, received baptism from John, died on the Cross, rose from the tomb three days after He died, and sits at the right hand of the throne of God, having Himself made us righteous. He made creatures into children of God. And so we have received salvation.

Yet the bad ones say that the baptism of Jesus is not so, that it is a dangerous idea. A dangerous idea is what one says of an idea that has come out of ourselves. If it has come from God, it is the truth. If Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist to remove our sins, it is the truth. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? The bad ones, though someone delivered this precious pearl to them and they heard and believed it, throw it away. They drag the precious pearl's value all the way down, make it cheap, and sell it off. The truly precious pearl is beyond what all we have could buy. That is why God has saved us by grace. Yet they sell it off cheap. That pearl sold cheap is not the pearl of greatest price. It is an already corrupted pearl, an imitation. An imitation is never a pearl. A true pearl is made from the fluid of the oyster. As flesh is added to that fluid—that is, as blood is added—so our Lord became man for us.

Dear fellow believers, the bad ones, even after receiving the remission of sin, come forward saying that believing among ourselves alone is too narrow, so let us recognize everyone who believes in Jesus. And so, saying you have received the remission of sin and I have received the remission of sin, they leave out the baptism of Jesus and preach only the blood of the Cross. Dear fellow believers, that is what is bad. On the last day this bad thing He will take out of the net, that is, out of the church, and throw into the furnace of fire.

What kind of person is the wicked?

He said the angels separate the wicked from among the just. What kind of person is the wicked? It is the one who regards God's precious pearl lightly, sells it over like Judas for thirty pieces of silver, and tries to live his fill by it. A disciple who tried to live full by selling his own Teacher is a disciple, but he is wicked. He is saying there are such people. Dear fellow believers, do not become bad fish. It is not bad conduct or a bad temper that is called a bad fish. It clearly speaks of corrupting the precious pearl and the precious treasure. Such people will meet disaster on the last day. God has said it clearly.

On the last day there is a trial. Those who have no sin in their hearts, the righteous who have been washed of sin, come to stand on one side. The Lord sits behind, and He has the angels do the discerning. Yet even among the righteous there are those who will go into that fire. Those whose hearts prick them a little murmur, thinking, surely not me. There is also someone who worries: when I preached the gospel on this earth, I did not speak of the baptism Jesus received from John but just sold it off cheap—might this perhaps become a problem? And another worries all kinds of worries: I served the Lord poorly and have many shortcomings—will they take issue with this and send me into that fire? Then the angel asks, how did you preach the gospel on this earth?

One person answers: "Our Lord came to this earth with the water, the blood, and the Spirit—with the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen—and saved us. And so He made us righteous." The angel says: "Well done. Did you preach it so?" "I preached it so. Yet the work did not arise well. I prayed because I lacked power, and still it did not go well. Even so, I did preach with all my strength." "You have labored. Truly

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you have labored much. You had many shortcomings, and there were sins committed in secret, sins committed in the heart, and sins committed knowingly, but all those sins the Lord received the judgment for. Is that not why the Lord is seated over there?"

He also asks the person next to him: "You too, speak once." That person also testifies, exactly like the one before him, that the Lord saved him with the water, the blood, and the Spirit. "Then did you preach the gospel so?" "No. I preached it leaving one thing out." "What did you leave out when you preached?" "I preached leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John." "Why did you preach leaving it out?" "When I preached it, people called it a dangerous idea and thought it strange, so I thought it enough just to believe." "Then were you saved that way?" "No, I was not." "You were not saved that way—why then did you preach that way?"

After the Lord finishes all the work of discernment, He speaks. Those who received the remission of sin by the water, the blood, and the Spirit and preached it all just as it is, He puts into good vessels; those who, though they themselves were saved that way, left out the baptism Jesus received from John and preached only the blood of the Cross, He separates out and throws into the unquenchable furnace of fire. Though they cry out, "Lord, we clearly believed in You and were saved—what do You mean?", the Lord says, if you were saved that way, should you not also have preached that way? Why did you not preach so? One word, and it is finished. There is no room to plead that they will not do so from now on. The Lord has said it clearly. Among what has come into the net, the good fish He puts into vessels, and the bad fish He picks out again and throws away.

Do not corrupt the precious gospel of the water and the Spirit

Do you know what kind of person the wicked is? It is the one who, though he has clearly received the remission of sin through the water, the blood, and the Spirit of Jesus, does not preach it. It is the one who, when he preaches, leaves out the baptism Jesus received from John. That is the wicked. Dear fellow believers, if one preaches the gospel leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John, will anyone receive the remission of sin? Would that be the remission of sin? Even if you believe it one hundred percent, it is not the remission of sin. This is not something I say.

If the servants of God like the Apostle Paul, Peter, and John had preached only the blood of the Cross, leaving out the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, they would have had no occasion to be persecuted. In this age also, if those who truly preach the gospel did not preach the gospel of the baptism Jesus received from John and preached only the blood of the Cross, would there be any occasion for persecution? Even unbelievers all approve it. Even those who do not believe urge people to believe that believing in Jesus and believing in the blood of the Cross is salvation. Even the devil approves of believing that way. Believe well, he says; believe diligently, and let us go to hell together.

Dear fellow believers, if one is saved by preaching so and believing so, who would try to preach the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit? Who would want to be hated and not mix with people? To speak frankly, everyone wants to be recognized by all; who would wish not to be recognized? Yet the reason we preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit is that this pearl of salvation, this treasure the Lord has given us, is so precious. Because it is so precious, it cannot be preached

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carelessly at just any time, and its quality cannot be corrupted. When we preach, we preach only the most precious. When we work, we do only the most precious work. If we are not going to do it, we do not do it at all.

All of us—the servants and people who do God's work—when we work, do the most valuable work, and if we are not going to, we do not do it at all. Why would we do business that leaves no profit? We preach the gospel so that people may surely meet the Lord, become the Lord's children, become righteous, and become saints. If that does not happen, there is no need for us to preach the gospel. Therefore, do not indulge in useless bravado, but introduce and sell to people the truly precious pearl, the precious treasure. We play the role of salesmen. There are times we sell to one person in a year, and times we sell to two; but even if we sell to only one person, the profit is so great that the one who sells this single pearl gains more than the one who sells thousands and tens of thousands of cheap goods. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Keep this treasure until the day the Lord comes

We must come to our senses in this last time. In the last time the devil threatens, gives anxieties, and attacks in every way. Therefore we must pray. Pray in the chapel and pray at home, and when you are anxious, do not merely worry but pray. When we pray, God hears our prayer and helps us. And we must keep the faith. There is nothing good at all in throwing this faith away. How foolish it is to be robbed of the precious thing that has come to you! To be robbed of the treasure you have is a foolish thing. We must keep this treasure, keeping it until the day the Owner comes, until the day we enjoy glory through this treasure.

Now, both in this country and abroad, much corruption of the gospel of the water and the Spirit has come upon those who preach the gospel. They were not corrupted for no reason. The devil threatened and brought anxieties, and out of fear in their hearts they were all corrupted. And human greed arose and corrupted them—the greed to become rich. The servant of God is content if he eats three meals a day, can do God's work, and has the material means to serve the gospel. The richer one becomes within God, the more work he does; it is not to become rich and spend it on himself.

Dear fellow believers, let us keep the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us keep in our hearts this treasure of faith of greatest price. When He asks—What do you believe? Do you believe the gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit? Do you believe that Jesus came to this earth for you, received baptism from John for you and bore all your sins, washed away all the sins of your heart, and received the judgment on the Cross in your place, saving you from all sins?—we answer that we believe. Dear fellow believers, we must keep this faith. We must keep the faith that believes these three things until the day the Lord comes. Let us live keeping it. Let us not become foolish people.

Dear fellow believers, before long our Lord comes. Until that day we will do all our work on this earth. We will live our social lives, pray anxiously, and ask for help. If we wait only a little, He who is to come will come. Then why, in this last time, do some try to throw away that treasure? Why have many people thrown it away? Toward those who have thrown it away I speak with an aching heart: Foolish ones! If you throw away the treasure, the world will swallow you up. If you had not thrown away the treasure, that treasure would have made you glorious—why did you throw it away? Because of you, countless people

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go to hell. And know that you will be judged on the last day.

If I did not fear the Lord, I would be capable of doing anything. If the word of the Lord were not written in this world like this, I would have done whatever I pleased. But because I know the right answer, because I fear the Lord, I cannot bring myself to do it. I give thanks before the Lord who saved one so lacking and weak as I. I give thanks before the Lord who gave this lacking person a fearing heart and enabled me to live keeping this gospel of the water and the Spirit. I give thanks before the Lord who has kept me alive until now. From now on also, though I am lacking, even if business does not go well, I will live like this. You also, let us live like this.

Even if business does not go well, let us do this business to the end. This gospel business must never be changed to another line of goods. Worldly business can change its items, but the gospel business is serving only the Lord and preaching only the Lord. Do this gospel business to the end, and live as saints and servants of God who are praised by the Lord. ✉

◇ Next in the series: “Matthew Volume 4”

Following this book, the fourth volume of the Matthew Biblical Exposition & sermon series, which examines Matthew chapters 14 through 18 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit, will be published soon.

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

We sincerely hope that the books of Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will strengthen your f aith and become spiritual food for your soul.

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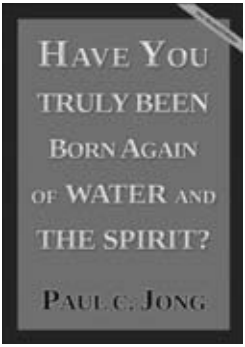
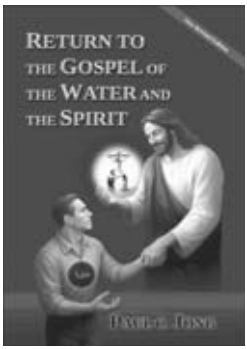
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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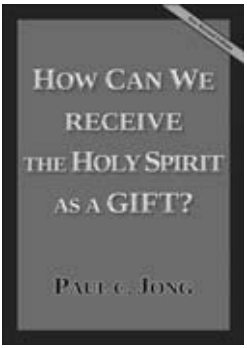
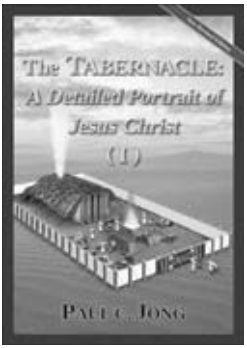
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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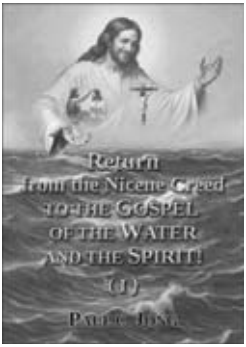
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

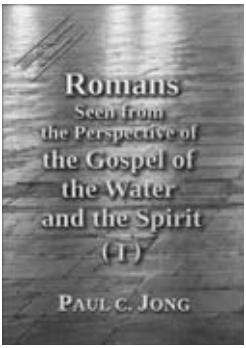
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



The four Gospels record the ministry of Jesus, who came into this world, called His disciples, preached the gospel of the kingdom of heaven with them, and saved sinners. Matthew chapters 1–4 testify that He is the promised King and Savior, through the genealogy and birth of Jesus, the ministry of John the Baptist, the baptism and temptation of Jesus, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven and the calling of the disciples.

At the center of these accounts is the baptism of Jesus recorded in Matthew 3:13–17. Through this baptism, all the sins of the world were passed on to Jesus, the Holy Spirit came down upon Him, and God the Father testified that He was His beloved Son. Jesus received on the Cross the judgment for the sins He had borne and rose again to complete salvation.

Believe in this gospel of the water and the Spirit with your heart, receive the remission of all sins, and discover the joy and freedom that the children of God enjoy.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

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

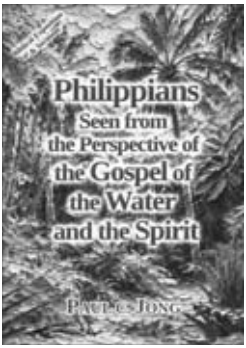


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a Bible study that unfolds the Psalms from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. David's songs are not an outpouring of emotion but the confession of a righteous man who has received the remission of sins, a prophetic praise that looked up to the Christ who is to come. The blessing, righteousness, and peace of the Psalms do not come from human goodness but from the salvation God accomplished in Christ.

Beneath it all flows a single gospel. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to make us righteous. When you open the Psalms with this gospel, the old songs come alive as your own confession, and this book leads you to the blessed place of those clothed in the righteousness of God.

Philippians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



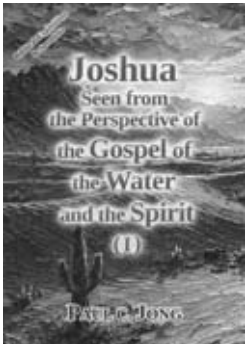
This book offers a fresh understanding of the Epistle to the Philippians from the perspective of the 'gospel of the water and the Spirit.' When we hold fast to the truth that Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself by being baptized by John, suffered judgment on the Cross, and was resurrected, the true source of Paul's joy becomes absolutely clear.

Paul discarded everything he once boasted of as rubbish, proclaiming instead the righteousness received from God through faith alone. Those who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit have already been delivered from sin and granted citizenship in heaven. Even though our flesh is weak, we are never again placed under condemnation; this is the root of true joy that remains unshaken in any circumstance.

Salvation has been accomplished completely, once and for all. Now, we must believe in this gospel with all our hearts and live boldly, sharing it in our new life. This book serves as a clear guide along that path.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)

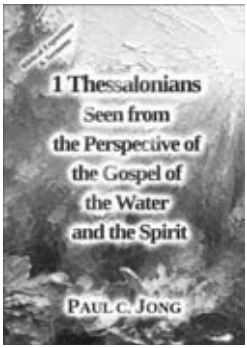


The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

1 Thessalonians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered in word only, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which came in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.

This book opens the five chapters of First Thessalonians anew with that very gospel. It is the gospel by which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and bore the sin of the world, was judged in our place for that sin on the cross, and rose again from death, delivering us from sin and death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the power of God that turns a sinner into a righteous one, and turns the fear of death into living hope.

If you desire a faith unshaken in the last days, open this book. Here is the sure word by which you receive the remission of sins—life and true comfort for you.

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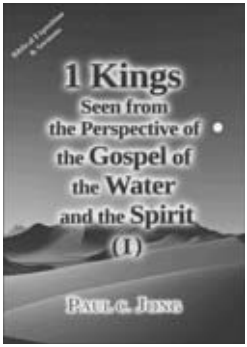
1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

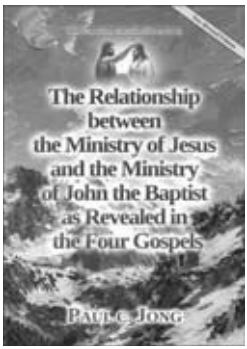


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

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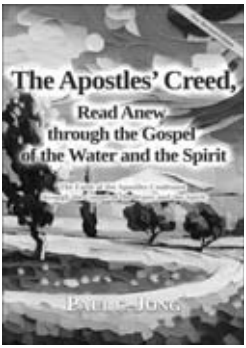
Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

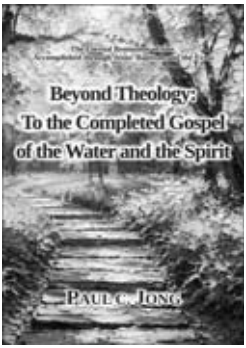


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (Coming Soon)



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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Sincerely,
The New Life Mission



Pastor PAUL C. JONG

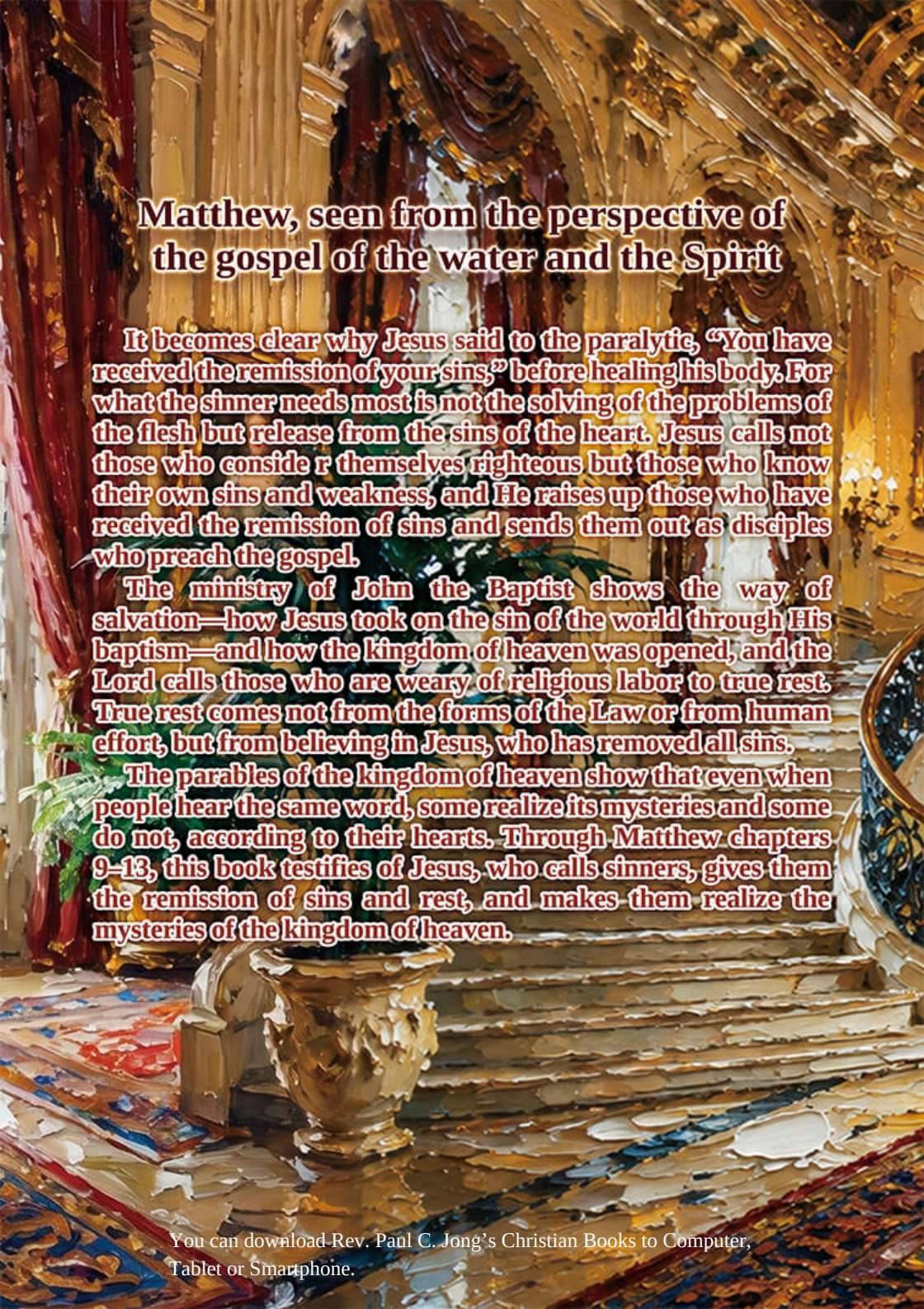
Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

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, comprising an ongoing 90-volume series, have been translated into more than 110 languages and are read in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available for free at www.bjnewlife.org, while physical books can be purchased on Amazon.

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



Matthew, seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

It becomes clear why Jesus said to the paralytic, "You have received the remission of your sins," before healing his body. For what the sinner needs most is not the solving of the problems of the flesh but release from the sins of the heart. Jesus calls not those who conside r themselves righteous but those who know their own sins and weakness, and He raises up those who have received the remission of sins and sends them out as disciples who preach the gospel.

The ministry of John the Baptist shows the way of salvation—how Jesus took on the sin of the world through His baptism—and how the kingdom of heaven was opened, and the Lord calls those who are weary of religious labor to true rest. True rest comes not from the forms of the Law or from human effort, but from believing in Jesus, who has removed all sins.

The parables of the kingdom of heaven show that even when people hear the same word, some realize its mysteries and some do not, according to their hearts. Through Matthew chapters 9–13, this book testifies of Jesus, who calls sinners, gives them the remission of sins and rest, and makes them realize the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

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