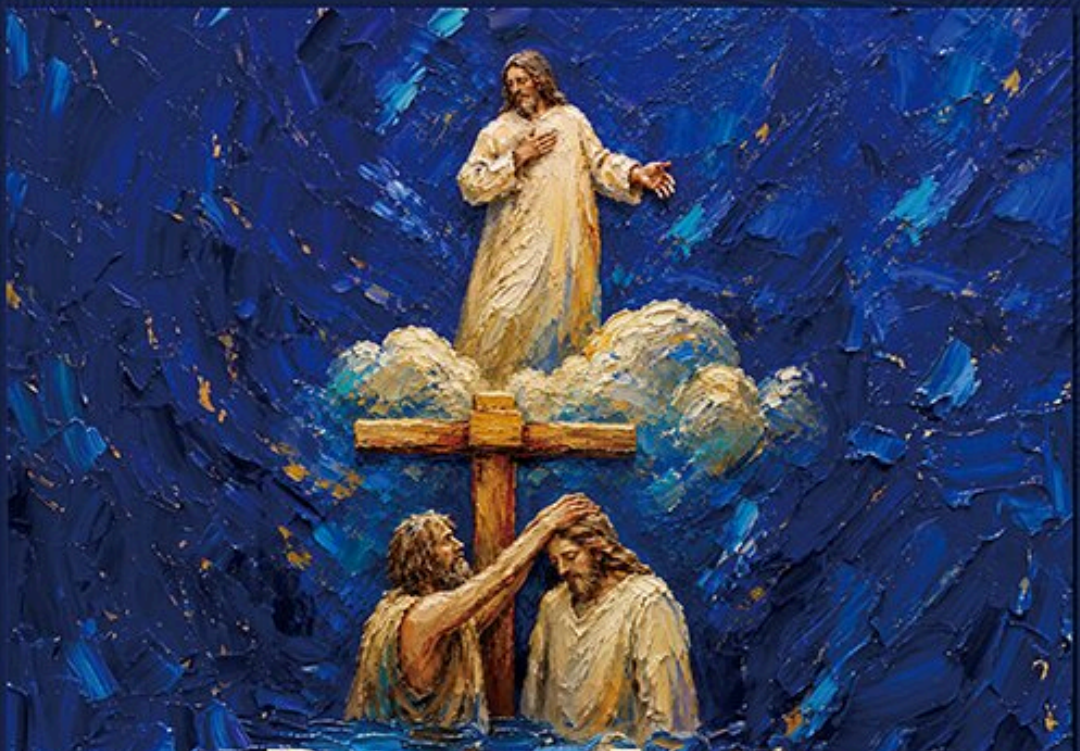
Biblical Exposition & Sermons

# Mark

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



PAUL C. JONG



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

Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Hephzibah

**"Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Mark 10:15)**

**What must a person do to obtain eternal life? The man of great possessions said that he had kept all the commandments, yet he could not let go of what he owned, and he went away sorrowful. The little children, by contrast, put forward nothing of their own; they were taken into Jesus' arms and received His blessing. The kingdom of God is not a reward earned by good deeds and religious effort.**

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***and read now,***

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***as this world is heading toward destruction.***

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


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

PAUL C. JONG



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

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

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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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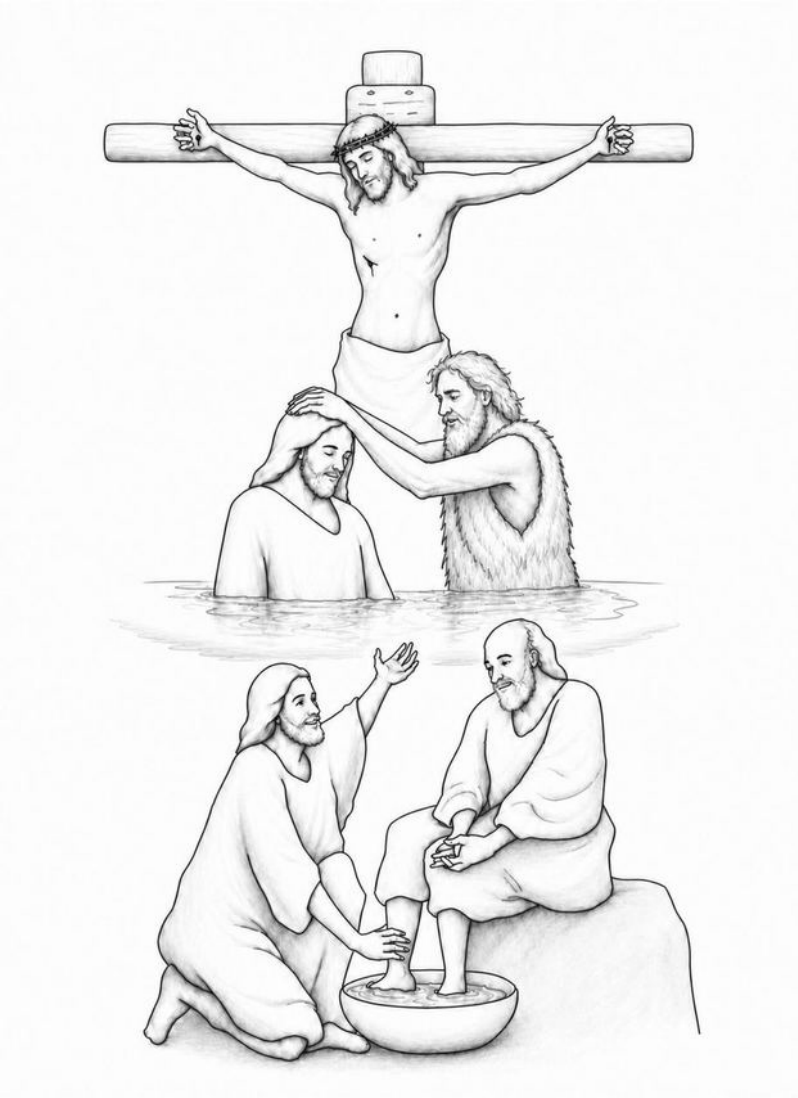

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# Preface

Dear readers, following Jesus closely does not in itself mean knowing His will rightly. The disciples saw Jesus' glory and many mighty works, yet they disputed who was the greater and sought high places. They believed Jesus to be the Christ, yet they did not understand the word that He must suffer and die and then rise again. This book leads us to see the way of the Christ and of the disciple according to the Word of God, not according to human expectation.

## We must believe the Word purely

On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared, but God said to hear the words of Jesus, His beloved Son. The Law and the Prophets testify of the Christ, but the One who completes salvation is Jesus. Faith lies not in possessing marvelous experiences but in believing the word the Son of God has spoken just as it is, even when it differs from one's own thinking.

The kingdom of God does not belong to the person who puts forward his own strength and merits. The person who receives grace like a little child, and who entrusts even his own lack of faith to the Lord, saying, "*help my unbelief!*"—this person goes forward by faith. Conversely, the person who thinks he has kept the Law well and depends on wealth and his own righteousness finds it hard to discover the fact that he needs salvation. Man cannot achieve salvation by his own strength, but God has already accomplished the work of saving sinners.

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With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took over all the sins of all humankind and bore them on His own body; He received the judgment of all those sins on the Cross; and in three days He rose from the dead. This salvation is not a matter of making up for what is lacking through human effort; it is the righteousness God accomplished from beginning to end. When the sinner receives this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart like a little child, he receives the remission of all his sins, is born again, and receives the Holy Spirit.

## The Lord, who came to serve, and the people the Lord uses

The Christ came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. Therefore the greatness of a disciple is not decided by position, authority, and people's recognition. The person who, according to the grace received from the Lord, receives the little ones, serves the people and the work entrusted to him, and preaches the gospel to other souls is used as a precious worker in the kingdom of God.

The life of bearing one's own cross is not paying the price of salvation. The One who bore all the sins of the world and was judged is Jesus Christ alone. The cross a disciple bears is the toil and the loss that the person already saved comes to undergo as he chooses the good of the gospel over his own desires and honor, and he carries them by faith. Serving is not a condition of salvation but the fruit of gratitude that comes from the life of one who has been saved.

This volume warns against the faith that looks lush on the outside and yet has no fruit. Even if one's religious activities are many and he is respected by people, if he does not believe the

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gospel with his heart and uses weak people, it is not the faith God delights in. The person entrusted with God's work is not the owner but a steward. He must not treat the church, the gospel, and souls as his own possession, but must remember the fact that everything belongs to the Lord and serve faithfully.

The commandment to love God and to love one's neighbor is the center of the whole Law. But a sinner cannot fulfill this love perfectly by his own strength. The sinner must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the love of God, who has saved him perfectly. The person who knows the grace of God, who saved him though he was undeserving, does not rashly condemn another's weakness, but shares the mercy he has received and uses himself and his possessions according to the Lord's will.

Dear readers, do not stop at calling Jesus Lord and Christ with your lips. Believe in how He bore and removed your sins. The eternal life Jesus completed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection is the gift of God, which cannot be bought with money or good deeds. Throw away your own righteousness and believe this grace; rather than seeking a high place, become one who serves; and live not as a religious person with only lush leaves but as a disciple who bears the fruit of love and of preaching the gospel. ✉

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# CHAPTER

# 9

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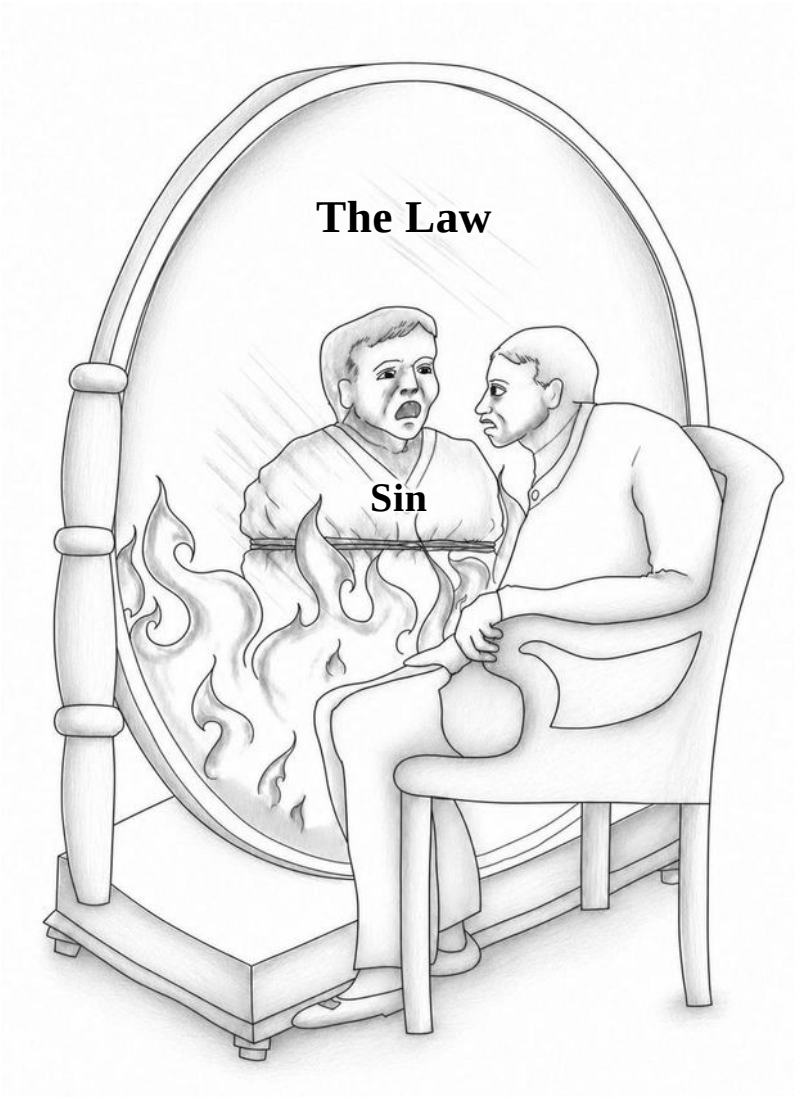


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# Mark Chapter 9

**< Mark 9:1-50 >**

**“And He said to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.’ Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah’— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!’ Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ Then He answered and told them, ‘Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him**

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**whatever they wished, as it is written of him.' And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?' Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.' He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.' Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This**

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**kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.' Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him. Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.' Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. 'But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—**

**where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ ‘For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.’”**

## 1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 9 begins with the event in which Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain and was transfigured in glorious form. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus, and out of the cloud came the voice saying, *“This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” (Mark 9:7)*. Coming down from the mountain, Jesus met a child seized by a mute spirit, whom the disciples could not heal. When the child’s father pleaded with Him to help his lacking faith, Jesus cast out the spirit and raised the child up. Then Jesus spoke again of how He would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise from the dead in three days, but the disciples did not understand what He meant. When the disciples argued over who was the greatest, Jesus taught that whoever desires to be first must become last of all and a servant, and He received a little child. He also said not to forbid a man who did not follow

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them from casting out demons in His name, and He sternly warned against causing one little one to stumble. At the end, He told them to cut off sin decisively, to have salt in themselves, and to have peace with one another. This chapter shows that the glorious Son of God walks the path of suffering, death, and resurrection, and that the disciple who follows Him must pursue faith, prayer, humble service, holiness, and peace with one another.

**1. Those who would see the kingdom of God present with power (verse 1)**

Jesus said that there were some standing there who would see the kingdom of God present with power before they died. This word follows what Jesus had said in the previous chapter about His coming again in the glory of His Father.

In the transfiguration that follows, Peter, James, and John saw the glorious form of Jesus for themselves. In its nearest sense, therefore, this word is connected with the glory of Jesus that the three disciples saw in advance on the Mount of Transfiguration. More broadly, it includes even the appearing of the kingdom of God with power through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the expansion of the gospel.

The disciples would soon see Jesus suffering and being killed. Jesus showed them in advance what glory He originally possessed, so that they would not look only at the Cross and think that everything had failed.

**2. Jesus, who was transfigured in glorious form on the Mount of Transfiguration (verses 2–4)**

After six days, Jesus went up on a high mountain, taking only Peter, James, and John. There the form of Jesus was

transfigured before the disciples, and His clothes shone so brightly that no method in this world could have made them so white.

Ordinarily Jesus lived in the same human form as other people, but on the Mount of Transfiguration He revealed to the three disciples the heavenly glory He possessed. This shows that Jesus is not a mere prophet or religious leader but the Son of God.

Then Elijah and Moses appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses is the figure who represents the Law, and Elijah the Prophets. Their appearing together with Jesus shows that the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament were pointing to Jesus and to the work He would accomplish.

Yet Moses and Elijah did not stand in the same position as Jesus. They are servants of God, but Jesus is the beloved Son of God, the One who fulfills the testimony of the Law and the Prophets.

**3. The voice of God that said, *"Hear Him!"* (verses 5–8).**

Peter said that he would make three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. He was so greatly afraid that he did not even properly know what he was saying. His proposal could sound like an attempt to set the three of them in similar positions.

Then a cloud covered them, and out of the cloud came the voice, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* God made it clear that the One whom the disciples must ultimately hear is Jesus.

A little later, when the disciples looked around, Moses and Elijah had disappeared and only Jesus remained. This does not mean that Moses and Elijah are to be despised; it shows that all the words they testified are fulfilled in Jesus and that their authority points to Jesus.

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A disciple must not exalt his own experience, tradition, or thoughts above the words of Jesus. What matters is not seeing an amazing sight but hearing, believing, and following the words of Jesus, the Son of God.

**4. The appearance of Elijah and the Son of Man who was to suffer (verses 9–13)**

As He came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until He had risen from the dead. The disciples kept this word in their hearts, but they discussed with one another what ‘rising from the dead’ meant.

The disciples asked why the scribes taught that Elijah must come first. Jesus said that Elijah indeed comes first and restores all things, and that Elijah had already come but people had treated him however they wished, as it is written in the Scriptures.

The Elijah who had already come refers here to John the Baptist, who prepared the way of Jesus with the mission and spirit of Elijah. John the Baptist cried out to the people to repent and testified of Jesus, but he was seized by Herod and put to death.

Jesus emphasized not only the prophecy concerning Elijah but also the word that the Son of Man would suffer many things and be treated with contempt. The disciples expected the glorious Christ, but they found it hard to accept the Christ who was to suffer. Yet the glory of Jesus and the Cross are not separated from each other.

**5. The child whom the disciples could not heal and his despairing father (verses 14–19)**

When Jesus and the three disciples came down from the

mountain, many people were surrounding the other disciples, and the scribes were disputing with them. One man came forward to Jesus and explained that he had brought his son, who was seized by a mute spirit.

Whenever the spirit seized the child, he fell down, foamed at the mouth, gnashed his teeth, and his body became rigid. The father asked the disciples to cast the spirit out, but they could not.

This event is a special case that the passage itself explains as the actual working of an unclean spirit. Therefore, we must not judge epilepsy or other neurological illnesses of today to be the same as demon possession on the basis of the symptoms shown here alone. Those who have illnesses need appropriate medical diagnosis and treatment.

Jesus lamented over the faithless generation and told them to bring the child to Him. The failure of the disciples did not mean any lack of power in Jesus. Problems that man cannot solve must be brought to Jesus.

**6. The plea, *"Help my unbelief!"* (verses 20–27).**

When the child was brought to Jesus, the spirit immediately convulsed him. When Jesus asked how long this had been happening, the father answered that it had been from childhood, and that the spirit had often thrown him into the fire and into the water to destroy him.

The father pleaded, *"If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."* Because he had suffered for a long time and had received no help even from the disciples, faith and doubt may have been together in his heart.

Jesus said, *"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23)*. This does not mean that everything a person desires is certain to come true if only he

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has strong conviction. It is a word teaching that the object of faith is not oneself or the size of one's faith but the almighty Jesus.

The child's father immediately cried out, *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* He did not pretend that his faith was perfect, but confessed to Jesus his actual state, in which faith and doubt were mixed. When we feel that our faith is lacking, we must not move away from Jesus but plead with Him to help even that lack.

Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and commanded it never to enter the child again. After the spirit came out, the child looked as if he were dead, and many said that he was dead; but when Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, the child arose. Jesus overcame the power of the spirit that had been oppressing the child and restored him.

**7. Jesus, who taught the need for prayer (verses 28–29)**

After Jesus entered the house, the disciples quietly asked why they had not been able to cast the spirit out. Jesus said that this kind could come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.

The disciples had previously received authority to cast out demons and had experience of ministering with it. But if they trusted only in past experience or in authority already received and did not rely on God, they could fail before the problem at hand.

Prayer is not an incantation or a technique that heightens human ability. It is an expression of faith that acknowledges that one cannot solve the problem oneself and seeks the power and help of God. The power of ministry comes not from human confidence or experience but from continually relying on God.

### 8. Foretelling His death and resurrection a second time (verses 30–32)

As Jesus passed through Galilee, He did not want to be known to the people. This was because He needed to teach His disciples intensively.

Jesus said again that the Son of Man would be delivered into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise three days after His death. The death of Jesus was not an accidental tragedy brought about by the force of His enemies; it lay within the plan of salvation that God would accomplish.

The disciples did not understand this word and were even afraid to ask Jesus. They had seen the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, but they did not understand that this glorious One had to suffer and die.

We must not hide what we have failed to understand or act as if we knew it. A disciple must acknowledge his own ignorance and ask about and learn the words of Jesus. If we fear asking questions, we may keep our wrong thoughts as they are.

### 9. The disciples who argued over who was the greatest (verses 33–37)

After Jesus arrived at a house in Capernaum, He asked the disciples what they had been disputing about on the road. The disciples could say nothing, because on the road they had argued with one another over who was the greatest.

Jesus had taught that He would suffer and die, but the disciples were thinking about who among them would take the higher place. This shows how different the path of Jesus was from the interests of the disciples.

Jesus said that whoever desires to be first must become last of all and a servant of all. In the kingdom of God, the great

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person is not the one who dominates others with power but the one who humbles himself and serves others.

Jesus took a little child, set him in the midst of the disciples, and held him in His arms. At that time, a little child was a being of little social standing and influence. Jesus said that whoever receives one such little child in His name receives Him, and receives God who sent Him.

True service is not dealing only with those who can repay us or give us honor. It is revealed in receiving and caring for, in the name of Jesus, those who are small and weak and unnoticed by people.

**10. *"He who is not against us is on our side"* (verses 38–41).**

John said that they had seen someone who did not follow the disciples casting out demons in the name of Jesus, and that they had forbidden him. The disciples found it hard to accept that a person who did not belong to their group was working in the name of Jesus.

Jesus told them not to forbid that man. For it is hard for anyone to speak evil of Jesus soon after working a miracle by relying on His name. Jesus said, *"He who is not against us is on our side" (Mark 9:40).*

This word does not mean that all religions and teachings are equally right. Nor does it mean that every act that makes use of the name of Jesus should be approved without discernment. The heart of this scene is that the disciples must not monopolize the work of Jesus as if it were the authority of their own group and hastily reject others.

Whoever gives the disciples even a cup of water because they belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. God remembers even small acts of service that go unknown to people. The value of service depends on its motive and its

object more than on its outward size.

**11. The warning not to cause a little one to stumble (verse 42)**

Jesus gave a stern warning to anyone who causes one of the little ones who believe in Him to stumble. He treated it so seriously as to say that it would be better for such a person to have a great millstone hung around his neck and be thrown into the sea.

Here the 'little ones' refers not only to children but also to disciples who are weak in faith or not regarded as important in society. Acts that lead others into sin or drive them away from faith are no light matter before God.

The more religious authority and knowledge a person has, the more he must examine what influence his words and actions have on those who are weak. He must not use or wound another person's faith for his own desires and boasting.

**12. The temptation of sin must be cut off decisively (verses 43, 45, 47–48)**

Jesus said that if one's hand or foot or eye causes one to sin, it should be cut off or cast away. He said that it is better to enter life disabled than to enter hell with two hands, two feet, and two eyes.

This word is not a command to actually mutilate the body. Sin comes not from the hands, feet, or eyes themselves but from the human heart, so mutilating the body does not solve sin. With this strong expression, Jesus taught that we must not take sin and its temptation lightly, but must decisively cut off the relationships, habits, and environments that lead us into sin.

Speaking of the fire that is not quenched and the worm that does not die, Jesus warned that the judgment of God is real and

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severe. We must not lose everlasting life for the sake of momentary pleasure or gain.

By his own will alone, no one can completely remove the nature of sin; yet neither may we leave the temptation of sin unattended. A person must acknowledge his own weakness, seek God's help, and actively depart from whatever fosters sin.

**13. Have salt in yourselves and have peace with one another (verses 49–50)**

Jesus said, *"Everyone will be seasoned with fire."* In this word, the fire does not mean a trial that refines faith or a process of purification. It refers to the unquenchable fire of hell and the judgment of God, spoken of repeatedly in the preceding verses 43–48. If a person follows the evil thoughts arising within himself, planning and doing evil, and yet refuses to turn back before the word of God to the very end, he will receive the judgment that corresponds to his deeds.

Jesus then said, *"Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?"* Salt preserves food from decay. In the same way, faith that believes in the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit keeps our hearts and our faith from being corrupted. The one whose heart is steeped in the word of God as with salt discerns the thoughts of the Spirit from the thoughts of the flesh, and chooses and follows the will that pleases God.

For salt to lose its flavor means to claim to have received the remission of sin and yet take the word of God lightly, keep following the thoughts and desires of the flesh, and abandon the duty of faith. It is a solemn warning that even a person who has received the remission of sin can be cast away if he does not fear God, stubbornly persists in wrong deeds to the end, and stands against the gospel and the Church. Therefore, no

one should make the fact of having been saved an excuse for living according to the desires of the flesh.

Jesus said, *"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."* This is a command to live with the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the word of God set firmly in our hearts. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took all our sins upon His own body; He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and He saved us by rising from the dead. We must solve the problem of our sins by believing this word of salvation and be reconciled to God.

Born-again brothers and sisters must also cast away their own wrong thoughts and deeds within the gospel and love one another and be at peace. No one may rashly judge, oppress, or cause another to stumble on the ground that he himself has received the remission of sin. To cherish and serve one another and to follow the thoughts of the Spirit in which God delights—this is the faith that keeps salt in the heart and lives in peace.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 9**

First, Jesus, who was transfigured in glorious form on the Mount of Transfiguration, is not a mere prophet but the beloved Son of God.

Second, after Moses and Elijah disappeared, only Jesus remained, and God commanded the disciples to hear the words of Jesus.

Third, the glory of Jesus is not separated from His suffering and the Cross, and He said repeatedly that He would rise from the dead three days after being killed.

Fourth, the child's father did not hide his lacking faith but pleaded, *"Help my unbelief!"* and Jesus did not turn away from his request.

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Fifth, the disciples must not rely on their own experience and ability, but must continually rely on God through prayer.

Sixth, in the kingdom of God the great person is not the one who takes a high position and dominates others, but the one who humbles himself and serves all.

Seventh, to receive in the name of Jesus a person as small and weak as a little child is to receive Jesus and God who sent Him.

Eighth, disciples must not let their own group monopolize the work of Jesus, nor hastily reject others merely because they do not follow them.

Ninth, to lead a weak person into sin or make him fall away from faith is a very serious sin before God.

Tenth, we must not take sin and judgment lightly, and we must decisively cut off the relationships, habits, and environments that lead a person into sin.

Eleventh, a disciple must keep the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart like salt so that his faith does not become corrupt, and must cast away the thoughts of the flesh and wrong deeds and be at peace with God and with his brothers and sisters.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 9 is the chapter in which Jesus, revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration as the glorious Son of God, made known that He would walk the path of suffering, death, and resurrection, and taught His disciples to acknowledge their lacking faith and rely on God in prayer, not to contend for high places but to serve the small and weak, to cut off the temptation of sin decisively, and to be at peace with one another.

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

Mark chapter 9 shows that Jesus, the glorious Son of God, walks the path of suffering, death, and resurrection to save sinners. Moses, who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, represents the Law that makes us realize our sins, and Elijah represents the mission of John the Baptist, who turned people back to God and prepared the way of Jesus. Whoever has realized his sins through the Law must believe the word of salvation: that Jesus bore all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and rose again. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God, and obtains the hope of being transformed into a glorious body when Jesus comes again. After being saved, we must rely on God in prayer instead of relying on our own ability, serve the little ones instead of contending for high places, cast away the thoughts of the flesh and the temptation of sin, and live at peace with one another within the gospel.

### 1. Showing the kingdom of God present with power (verse 1)

Jesus said that there were some standing there who would see the kingdom of God present with power before they died. In the transfiguration event that follows, Peter, James, and John saw the glorious form of Jesus for themselves.

Jesus is God, who will come again in the glory of His Father. Before the disciples saw Jesus suffering and dying, they saw His original identity and glory in advance. Jesus, who seemed to die in weakness on the Cross, is in fact the Son of God, who overcomes sin and death and will come again in glory.

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Those who have believed the gospel also live now in weak flesh, but when Jesus comes again, they will be transformed into incorruptible and glorious bodies. This hope does not come from human good deeds and self-discipline; it is given to those who have become God's children by believing the salvation Jesus completed.

**2. The flow of salvation shown by Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (verses 2–4)**

On the high mountain, Jesus was transfigured in glorious form before the disciples. His clothes shone so brightly that no method in this world could have whitened them so, and Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus.

Moses is the man who received the Law from God and passed it on to the people of Israel. The Law teaches what God judges to be sin, and makes everyone realize that no one can be righteous before God by his own deeds. But although the Law can expose sin, it cannot itself remove sin.

Elijah is the prophet who turned the hearts of the people back to God when they had fallen into idolatry. The Scriptures connect John the Baptist, who came before Jesus and prepared His way, with *"Elijah who is to come."* This does not mean that the Elijah who appeared on the mountain was John the Baptist himself, but the mission of Elijah shows the mission of John the Baptist, who led people to repent and guided them to Jesus.

Between mankind, who realized their sins through the Law, and Jesus, who came as the Savior, John the Baptist ministered as the representative of mankind. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore the sins of all people on His own body, and John the Baptist testified of Him, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

The Law that Moses passed on makes us realize our sins; John the Baptist made the sins of mankind pass on to Jesus and then testified to that fact; and Jesus carried those sins to the Cross, was judged, and rose again. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration show this flow of salvation that appears throughout the whole Bible.

**3. The command of God, *"Hear Him!"* (verses 5–8).**

Peter said that he would make three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. But God said out of the cloud, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* A little later, Moses and Elijah were no longer seen, and only Jesus remained beside the disciples.

Moses and Elijah are precious servants of God, but they do not stand in the same position as Jesus. Moses passed on the Law and Elijah turned the people back to God, but the One who Himself saves sinners is Jesus, the Son of God.

No one can receive the remission of sin by keeping the Law or by following religious figures. God commanded us to hear the words of Jesus. Therefore, we must exalt the word of salvation that Jesus accomplished above our own experience, emotions, and religious traditions.

Everyone must believe, just as the word says, that Jesus bore all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Because Jesus paid the wages of all sins in full on the Cross, no judgment of sin remains to be received again for the one who believes this gospel.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and, in His fundamental nature, the Creator God. The Holy Spirit does not teach any way of salvation different from the word of God, but makes us realize and believe the salvation Jesus completed with the water and the blood.

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**4. The Elijah who was to come and the role of John the Baptist (verses 9–13)**

As He came down from the mountain, Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until He had risen from the dead. The disciples asked Jesus about the teaching of the scribes that Elijah must come first.

Jesus said that Elijah comes first and restores all things, and that Elijah had already come but people had failed to recognize him and had treated him however they wished. This refers to John the Baptist, who prepared the way of Jesus and was killed by Herod.

John the Baptist was not merely a man who gave people the baptism of repentance; he was the messenger sent by God, who guided people to Jesus and prepared the work of salvation as the representative of mankind. He cried out to the people to realize that they were sinners and to return to Jesus. And as the representative of mankind, he carried out the mission of baptizing Jesus so that all the sins of the world would pass on to Him.

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist is connected with the principle of the sacrifices of the Old Testament, in which the sinner laid his hands on the head of the offering and passed his sins onto it. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest laid his hands on the head of the sacrificial offering on behalf of the people of Israel, and the offering that had received their sins died in the people's place.

Jesus was without sin, but He came to John the Baptist in order to bear the sins of mankind. Afterward, John the Baptist testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. To know how sins passed on to Jesus, we must rightly know not only the ministry of Jesus but also the role of John the Baptist, who prepared His way.

**5. Acknowledging our lack of faith and coming to Jesus (verses 14–27)**

When Jesus came down from the mountain, a father came out bringing his son, who was seized by a mute spirit. He had asked the disciples for help, but they could not cast the spirit out.

The child's father said to Jesus, *"If You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."* Jesus said that all things are possible to him who believes, and the father cried out, *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"*

This father did not claim that his faith was perfect. He acknowledged his actual state—wanting to believe and yet doubting—and sought the help of Jesus. For a sinner to be saved, he must first lay down his own ability and righteousness and acknowledge that by his own strength he cannot escape from sin and judgment.

Yet no one is saved merely by acknowledging his own lack. He must believe that the power to save him lies with Jesus. The ground of salvation is not the size of one's faith or strong emotion, but Jesus, the object of faith, and the work He accomplished.

Jesus cast the unclean spirit out of the child and took him by the hand and lifted him up. Jesus is God, stronger than the power of sin, Satan, and death. A sinner cannot overcome the power of Satan by himself, but Jesus delivers whoever believes in Him out of the power of sin and establishes him as a child of God.

**6. Prayer is laying down our own ability and relying on God (verses 28–29)**

After entering the house, the disciples asked Jesus why they had not been able to cast the spirit out. Jesus said that this kind

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could come out by nothing but prayer.

The disciples had previous experience of casting out demons and healing the sick. But by relying only on past experience and on the authority given to them, they could not solve the problem before them. What they needed was prayer that relies on God continually.

Prayer is not a method of manipulating God's power to fulfill one's own wishes. It is acknowledging that one is a creature and a weak being, and seeking God's wisdom, power, and guidance.

Believing the gospel, too, is not accomplished by human wisdom and effort alone. We must ask God for help so that we can hear and understand His word. Even after being saved, we must not boast of our experience and knowledge, but pray that our hearts may stand firm on the gospel and that we may pass the word of life on to others.

The ground of the remission of sin is not the amount or the zeal of our prayers. The salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection is the ground of the remission of sin. Prayer is an act of faith for believing and relying on the salvation already accomplished and living according to the will of God.

### 7. The salvation completed through death and resurrection (verses 30–32)

Jesus told His disciples again that He would be delivered into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise three days after His death. The disciples did not understand this word and were even afraid to ask.

The death of Jesus was not a sudden accident or a failure of the plan of salvation. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who had borne the sins of mankind, had to be judged and die in

the place of sinners.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus accepted onto His own body all the sins of mankind—past, present, and future. Then, carrying the sin of the world, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and died, paying the wages of sin in full.

If we speak only of the blood of the Cross and do not know why Jesus was judged in the place of sinners, it is hard to understand the flow of salvation fully. It is because Jesus had first borne the sins of mankind that He was judged on the Cross in the place of sinners.

Jesus rose from the dead in three days and showed that He is the Son of God and the Savior who has overcome sin and death. The water testifies that the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus; the blood testifies that Jesus received the judgment of those sins; and the Spirit testifies that Jesus is God. These three bear witness to one complete salvation.

**8. The greatest person is the one who serves all (verses 33–37)**

On the road, the disciples disputed with one another over who was the greatest. Jesus had spoken of His death and resurrection, but the disciples' interest lay in high places and people's recognition.

Jesus said that whoever desires to be first must become last of all and a servant of all. The order of the kingdom of God does not lie in lording it over others and displaying one's power, as the world does.

Jesus Himself showed the most perfect example of service. Jesus, the Creator God, came in the lowly body of a man to save sinners, and bore all the sins of sinners with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And He took upon Himself

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the suffering and death of the Cross in the place of sinners.

Jesus held a little child in His arms and said that whoever receives such a child in His name receives Him and God who sent Him. A little child was not a person of high position or great influence.

The saved must not boast of their office and knowledge and dominate others. Just as Jesus humbled Himself and served sinners, we must respect and care even for those who are small and weak and unable to repay. True spiritual growth is revealed not in rising to a high place but in giving life to others from a lower place.

**9. We must not hastily reject those who do not follow our group (verses 38–41)**

John said that they had seen someone who did not follow the disciples casting out demons in the name of Jesus and had forbidden him. Jesus told them not to forbid that man, saying that he who was not against them was on their side.

This word does not mean that every religious teaching is right, or that everyone who uses the name of Jesus should be acknowledged as saved. The truth of salvation must be clearly discerned. Yet neither may we immediately regard a person as an enemy or treat him with hostility just because he does not yet fully know the gospel.

There are also those who know only the Cross and do not yet know that Jesus bore sins with the baptism He received from John. If such a person does not stand against the gospel and wants to know the truth, we must wait for him and pass on to him the way of salvation accurately through the Scriptures.

The purpose of teaching the truth does not lie in winning arguments or condemning the other person. It lies in helping that person also to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit,

receive the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit, and become a child of God.

Jesus said that even one who gives the disciples a cup of water because they belong to Christ will not lose his reward. God does not forget even small acts of service done for the gospel and for those who belong to the gospel.

**10. The seriousness of causing one little one to stumble (verse 42)**

Jesus sternly warned anyone who causes one of the little ones who believe in Him to stumble. He treated it so seriously as to say that it would be better to have a great millstone hung around one's neck and be thrown into the sea.

The saved are children of God who belong to Jesus Christ. Even a person who seems lacking in the flesh and low in position must not be treated carelessly or despised. Our attitude toward that person is directly connected with our attitude toward Jesus, who saved him.

If a person with religious knowledge and office oppresses, manipulates, or insults the weak and makes them fall from faith, God is not pleased. Even when exhorting someone about a fault, there must be love and patience that seek to save and restore that person.

One who preaches the gospel must not try to make others subject to himself. Instead of binding people to himself, he must guide them to Jesus and help them stand in faith on the word of God.

**11. The meaning of the words to cut off the hand and the foot and to pluck out the eye (verses 43, 45, 47–48)**

Jesus said that if the hand or the foot or the eye causes one to sin, it should be cut off or cast away. This does not mean

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actually mutilating the body; it is a strong warning not to take sin and the judgment of hell lightly, but to cut off decisively whatever leads us into sin.

Man's sins come not from the hands, feet, or eyes themselves but from the heart. Therefore, mutilating the body does not remove the nature of sin. All the sins that come out of the human heart passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and Jesus received the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

Having received the remission of sin by believing this gospel does not mean that we may take sin lightly or live as we please. Even within the saved, the thoughts of the flesh and the heart that wants to follow the Holy Spirit can clash with each other. At such times, we must not simply follow our own desires but choose the way that pleases God.

The hand represents what a person does, the foot the direction in which he walks, and the eye what he looks at and desires. If there are actions, paths, and desires that make us leave God, we must not justify them but cast them away decisively.

A life that departs from sin is not a price paid to obtain the remission of sin. It is the fruit of faith that gives thanks for the grace of Jesus, who removed all our sins, and lives according to the will of God who saved us.

### 12. The salt of the gospel of the water and the Spirit that keeps the heart from corruption (verses 49–50)

Jesus said, *"Everyone will be seasoned with fire."* Here the fire does not mean a process that refines faith or purifies a person. It refers to the unquenchable fire of hell and the judgment of God, which He warned of repeatedly in the preceding words. If a person follows evil thoughts, planning

and doing evil, and yet refuses to turn back before the word of God to the very end, he receives the judgment that corresponds to his deeds.

Salt preserves food from decay. In the same way, faith that believes in the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit keeps our hearts and our faith from being corrupted by the thoughts of the flesh and the evil of the world. The one who binds his heart firmly with the word of God, as if steeping it in salt, discerns between the thoughts of the Spirit and the thoughts of the flesh that arise in his heart, and chooses and follows the will that pleases God.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body; carrying those sins, He was judged on the Cross, shedding His blood; and He completed our salvation by rising from the dead. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a word that gives us an excuse to live according to the desires of the flesh. Rather, it is the truth that leads us to believe in the grace of the Lord who saved us from all sins, to turn from evil thoughts and wrong deeds, and to live a life that pleases God.

For salt to lose its flavor means to claim to have received the remission of sin and yet take the word of God lightly, keep following the thoughts and desires of the flesh, and abandon the duty of faith. Such a person not only fails to carry out the mission of preaching the gospel of life, but may also persist in wrong deeds to the end, stand against the gospel and the Church, and be cast away by God and come to judgment. Therefore, even those who have received the remission of sin must fear God and examine their hearts and deeds before His word.

When Jesus said, *"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another,"* it was a command to live with the word of

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God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit set firmly in our hearts. We must be reconciled to God by believing the gospel that the Lord has already solved all our sins. And with our born-again brothers and sisters, we must cast away our own faults within the gospel and live in love, cherishing one another and at peace. This is the faith that keeps the salt of the gospel in the heart and lives following the thoughts of the Spirit in which God delights.

**13. We must be reconciled to God and have peace with one another (verse 50)**

Jesus told the disciples to have salt in themselves and have peace with one another. Earlier, the disciples had argued over who was the greatest, had rejected a man who did not follow them, and were also in danger of causing little ones to stumble.

A sinner cannot be reconciled to God by his own good deeds or efforts. Reconciliation with God was accomplished when Jesus bore the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again.

Whoever believes this gospel escapes from the place of a sinner at enmity with God and becomes a child of God. The Holy Spirit comes upon the heart of the one who has received the remission of sin, makes him understand the word of God, and leads him to live a life that pleases God.

Those who have been reconciled to God must also strive to be at peace with others. We must admit our faults and apologize, bear long with the weaknesses of others, and respect one another as precious people who belong to Christ.

Peace is not giving up the truth or covering over wrong behavior unconditionally. It is correcting faults within the truth of the gospel while restoring the other person rather than

tearing him down, and being united in love, casting away pride, rivalry, and hatred.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 9 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit**

First, Jesus, who appeared in glorious form on the Mount of Transfiguration, is the beloved Son of God and, in His fundamental nature, the Creator God.

Second, the Law of Moses makes man realize his sins but cannot remove them; the grace and truth that save sinners came through Jesus Christ.

Third, John the Baptist, who is connected with the Elijah who was to come, guided people to Jesus; as the representative of mankind, he baptized Jesus so that all the sins of the world would pass on to Him; and he testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Fourth, since God said, *"Hear Him!"* we must exalt the word of salvation that Jesus accomplished above our own thoughts and religious traditions.

Fifth, Jesus bore all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again, accomplishing complete salvation.

Sixth, a sinner must acknowledge that his own faith and ability are lacking, and believe that the power to save him from sin, Satan, and death lies with Jesus.

Seventh, prayer is not a merit for obtaining the remission of sin, but an act of faith that lays down one's own ability, relies on God, and seeks His will.

Eighth, in the kingdom of God the great person is not the one who dominates others with high position, but the one who humbles himself and serves the small and weak.

Ninth, we must not hastily treat as an enemy a person who

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does not yet fully know the gospel, but must pass the truth on to him accurately and be patient until he comes to faith.

Tenth, we must not despise or cause to stumble a little one who belongs to Christ, but must respect the weak and build them up on faith.

Eleventh, even the saved must not take the thoughts of the flesh and the temptation of sin lightly, but must decisively cast away the actions, paths, and desires in which God does not delight.

Twelfth, the gospel of the water and the Spirit is like salt that keeps the human heart from being corrupted by the sins of the world and self-centered thoughts.

Thirteenth, whoever has been reconciled to God by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished must cast away pride and rivalry and live at peace with others as well.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 9 is the chapter that shows that Jesus, the glorious Son of God, has cleansed sinners and transformed them into children of God through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, and that whoever believes this gospel must therefore pray without relying on his own ability, serve the weak from a low place, cast away the temptation of sin decisively, and live at peace with one another with the salt of the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart. ✉

Mark Chapter 9

# Believe in the Son of glory, humble yourself, and follow the way of life

## Introduction

Mark chapter 9 begins with the glory of Jesus revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration and continues into the path of faith and service that a disciple must walk. On the mountain, the form of Jesus was changed, His clothes shone dazzlingly, and Moses and Elijah appeared. But the voice from heaven commanded, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* The promises of the Law and the Prophets point to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and salvation begins not with human tradition or religious zeal but with hearing and believing His words.

When they came down from the mountain, a demon-possessed child and the helpless disciples were waiting. The experience of having seen the glory could not by itself save a suffering soul. The child's father cried out, *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* and Jesus accomplished what the disciples had failed to do. Faith is not displaying one's own ability; it is acknowledging one's own inability and relying on the Lord.

Jesus taught repeatedly that He would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise again in three days. The glory of the Mount of Transfiguration was not a glory that avoided the Cross. Jesus was the Son of God, who would bear all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the

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Baptist, carry those sins to be judged on the Cross, and complete salvation by rising again. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins by the righteousness Christ accomplished, receives the Holy Spirit, and is born again.

Yet even while hearing of the Lord's suffering, the disciples argued over who was greater and tried to stop a man who did not belong to their company from working in the name of Jesus. Jesus taught that to be first one must become last of all and serve, and that to receive one little one is to receive the Lord Himself. He also sternly warned against causing a little one to stumble and against the attitude that takes sin lightly, and told them to have salt in themselves and have peace with one another.

Mark chapter 9 therefore demands not the boast of having seen glory but the faith that hears and follows the words of Jesus. Those who have been saved by believing the gospel must entrust their weakness to the Lord, choose the place of serving souls over the high place, and examine themselves so as not to cause others to stumble. Faith in the Son of God is revealed in a life that stands firm on the gospel of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, treasures the little ones, and follows the leading of the Holy Spirit to be at peace.

## The glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration shows that Jesus is the Son of God, and God commanded the disciples to hear the words of Jesus rather than Moses and Elijah

*"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the*

*kingdom of God present with power.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.'" (Mark 9:1–13).*

Jesus had said before this that whoever loses his life for Him and for the gospel will save it, and that He would come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. He then said that there were some standing there who would see the kingdom of God present with power before they died. Since Peter, James, and John saw the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration six days later, this event is a sign that showed

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in advance that the kingdom of God would appear in power and glory.

Jesus took the three disciples and went up on a high mountain apart. Peter, James, and John had also been with Jesus when He raised the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, and later they would accompany Him closely in Gethsemane as well. Jesus established them as witnesses of important events. The scene on the Mount of Transfiguration was not a human imagination or a religious vision, but an event the disciples saw for themselves and would afterward have to testify to.

On the mountain, Jesus was transfigured before the disciples. His clothes shone, becoming so exceedingly white that no launderer in the world could whiten them like that. It is not that Jesus became the Son of God only at this moment. He is God from the beginning, but He humbled Himself and put on human flesh to save sinners. On the Mount of Transfiguration, His divine glory, which had been veiled by the flesh, was revealed to the disciples for a moment.

This appearance shows that the suffering and death Jesus had foretold were not things happening because of powerlessness or failure. Jesus, who would be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, was not an ordinary human being or a defeated prophet. The God of glory was willingly humbling Himself and walking the path of suffering to save sinners. Therefore, the Cross of Jesus is not an event opposed to His glory, but the work of salvation in which the love and the righteousness of God were revealed.

Then Elijah and Moses appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses is the representative of the Law of the Old Testament, who received the Law from God and passed it on to the people of Israel. The Law shows the holy standard of God and makes

people realize that they are sinners, but no sinner can keep the Law perfectly and become righteous by himself. Before the Law, everyone discovers his own sins and his state of deserving judgment.

Elijah is the prophet who rebuked the people of Israel when they had fallen into idolatry and turned their hearts back to God. God promised that before the Christ came, He would send a servant with the mission of Elijah. The one who came according to this promise is John the Baptist. This does not mean that the Elijah of the Old Testament had been reborn into the world; it means that John the Baptist, with the same mission and power as Elijah, turned people's hearts back to God and prepared the way of the Christ.

The appearing of Moses and Elijah together with Jesus shows that all the words of the Law and the Prophets point to Jesus Christ. Yet Moses and Elijah do not stand in the same position as Jesus. Moses and Elijah are servants of God, but Jesus is the beloved Son of God and the Savior who fulfills the Law and the prophecies. All the words of the Old Testament testify to the salvation of God that would be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Seeing the amazing sight, Peter said that he would build a tabernacle for each of them: for Jesus, for Moses, and for Elijah. He may have wanted to stay there and keep enjoying the glorious scene. But the passage explains that he was greatly afraid and did not know what to say. His proposal looked like good zeal, but it contained the error of placing Jesus side by side with Moses and Elijah.

Then a cloud came and covered them, and out of the cloud came the voice of God, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* In the Scriptures, a cloud is sometimes used when the presence and the glory of God appear. God did not tell the disciples to

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build tabernacles; He commanded them to hear the words of Jesus. The center of faith lies not in holding on to a mysterious sight or building religious structures, but in hearing and believing the words spoken by the Son of God.

The command *"Hear Him!"* means to believe even the words about the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which the disciples found hard to accept. Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ, and yet he stood in the way of the word that He had to suffer and die. But God did not tell us to pick out and hear only the words that suit our own thoughts. We must hear as they are not only the words of the glory of Christ but also the words of His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection for sinners.

When the disciples suddenly looked around, Moses and Elijah were not seen, and only Jesus remained with them. This does not mean that the ministry of Moses and Elijah was worthless. They faithfully carried out the mission God had entrusted to them, but the One who finally saves people from sin is Jesus Christ alone. The Law makes us realize our sins and the prophets testify of the Savior, but the One who bears sin, receives the judgment in our place, and gives everlasting life is Jesus, the Son of God.

On the way down the mountain, Jesus commanded them that *"they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead."* If only the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration were passed on and the Cross and the resurrection were left out, people could misunderstand Jesus as a being who displays mysterious powers or as a king who would seize worldly power. What kind of Savior Jesus is had to be fully revealed through His ministry of bearing sins with the baptism He received from John, dying, and coming back to life.

The disciples kept the word of Jesus in their hearts, but they

questioned one another about what rising from the dead meant. They may have heard about the resurrection at the last day, but they did not properly understand that Jesus would first die and rise again in three days. They had seen the glorious transfiguration, but they had not yet clearly realized that on the way to that glory lay the Cross and the resurrection.

Because the disciples had seen Elijah on the mountain for themselves, they asked why the scribes taught that Elijah must come before the Christ. Jesus acknowledged that Elijah indeed comes first and restores all things, and yet said that Elijah had already come and that people had treated him however they wished. This refers to John the Baptist, who came to prepare the way of the Christ. John the Baptist exposed people's sins with the word of God and preached repentance, but he was hated by Herod and Herodias, imprisoned, and put to death.

The word that John the Baptist restores all things must not be understood to mean that he would himself solve every political and social problem. He received the mission of turning back the hearts of those who had left God because of sin and guiding them to Jesus Christ. In particular, as the representative of mankind he baptized Jesus so that all the sins of sinners would pass on to the Lamb of God, and he testified of Jesus as the One who takes away the sin of the world. But John the Baptist himself is not the Savior. The One who saves people from sin is Jesus Christ alone, and John the Baptist is a servant sent by God to testify of Him and of the righteousness He would fulfill.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore the sins of all the people of the world on His own body. The sinless Son of God accepted and carried all sins by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind; and carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross and shed His blood and

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died, receiving the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried, rose again in three days, overcame sin and death, and completed salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which the Law and the Prophets testified to, and which God told us to hear as the words of Jesus.

Jesus spoke together of the fact that John the Baptist, who had the mission of Elijah, had suffered, and of how He Himself would receive many sufferings and much contempt. Just as people had failed to recognize the servant God sent and had treated him as they pleased, Jesus, the Son of God, was also rejected by the religious leaders and the people. But people's rejection could not make the plan of God fail. Jesus, who bore the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, fulfilled the Cross and the resurrection just as it is written, and became the perfect Savior.

The glory of Jesus revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration also gives the hope of the resurrection to those who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Those who have received the remission of sin may live in weak flesh in this world and die, but when the Lord comes again, they will put on the glorious body of the resurrection and enter the everlasting kingdom of God. This does not mean, however, that every believer must experience a mysterious sight like the Mount of Transfiguration on this earth. Saving faith lies not in seeing special visions but in believing with the heart the written gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This passage teaches that the glory and the suffering of Jesus must not be separated from each other. The glorious Son of God humbled Himself for sinners and completed the righteousness of God through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Instead of trying to establish our own

righteousness by keeping the Law of Moses or making mysterious experiences the ground of salvation, we must obey the command of God: *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* Whoever hears and believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished receives the remission of all sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, and lives in hope of the kingdom of God and the glory of the resurrection.

## Jesus accomplished what the disciples could not do, and the father who lacked faith entrusted even his weakness to the Lord

*"And when He came to the disciples, He saw a great multitude around them, and scribes disputing with them. Immediately, when they saw Him, all the people were greatly amazed, and running to Him, greeted Him. And He asked the scribes, 'What are you discussing with them?' Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.' He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.' Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.' Jesus said to him, 'If you can*

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*believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!' When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'" (Mark 9:14–29).*

When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, James, and John, an entirely different scene was unfolding at the foot of the mountain. On the mountain the glory of God had appeared and the voice had said, *"Hear Him!"* but at the foot of the mountain the disciples were disputing with the scribes, unable to help a demon-possessed child. Seeing the glory of Jesus and bearing the sufferings of reality by relying on His power cannot be separated.

A great multitude was surrounding the disciples, and the scribes were disputing with them. The passage does not reveal the details of the dispute, but it is very likely that the disciples' failure to heal the child had given occasion for the argument. The disciples had earlier received from Jesus the authority to control unclean spirits and had actually cast out demons. But having experienced power in the past did not mean that they could always do the same thing by their own strength.

When Jesus asked what they were disputing about, the child's father answered directly. He had brought his son, who had a mute spirit, to Jesus, but since Jesus was then on the

mountain, he had sought help from the disciples. The disciples, however, could not cast out the demon. In the father's words were both a desperate longing to save his son and disappointment at the disciples' failure.

The demon seized the child, threw him down, made him foam at the mouth and gnash his teeth, and the child was gradually pining away. Some of these features may look similar to the symptoms of convulsive disorders that are explained medically today. But the passage clearly records that in this event an unclean spirit was actually oppressing the child. At the same time, we must not conclude on the basis of this one event that every convulsion, every speech or hearing impairment, or every mental or neurological illness is the work of demons. Those who suffer from illness need not condemnation but proper medical care and treatment, protection, and love.

Jesus lamented, *"O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?"* This rebuke was not directed at the suffering child alone. It was a word that exposed together the unbelief of the disciples, who had lived with Jesus and yet failed to rely on Him fully; of the scribes, who were arguing over the failure; and of the crowd, who looked only at visible results. Jesus had shown who He was through many signs and words, but people still did not believe Him.

But Jesus did not end with rebuke; He said, *"Bring him to Me."* The disciples' inability did not mean that the power of Jesus was gone. Nor did the experience of failing with people mean that the way to come to the Lord was closed. We must not give up on Jesus because of human insufficiency and the failures of religious people, but must come directly to the Lord, who can solve the problem.

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When the child was brought to Jesus, the demon, seeing Jesus, immediately convulsed the child severely. The child fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. The situation seemed to have grown even worse, though he had come near to Jesus. But the violent scene, which looked like a last desperate struggle, could not overcome the authority of Jesus. We must not judge that the Lord's power has vanished just because the situation before our eyes has worsened.

Jesus asked the father how long this had been happening. It was not merely that Jesus asked to gain information He did not have. He let the father speak of the suffering he had endured for so long, and so brought out his heart and his faith. The father answered that this had continued since the child was little, and that the demon had often thrown him into the fire and into the water to kill him. The child's suffering was also the pain of the whole family, who had had to watch over and protect him at his side.

The father pleaded, *"But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."* In the words *"on us"* is contained the desperation not only of the child but of the family, who had suffered with him for a long time. Though he was asking Jesus for help, he was not sure what Jesus could really do, because he had seen the disciples fail. He had equated the disciples' inability with the ability of Jesus.

Jesus said, *"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."* The problem did not lie in whether Jesus could do it. There is nothing impossible for the Son of God, who created the heavens and the earth and casts out demons by His command; the problem was the heart of the person who failed to believe Him. Jesus led the father to look to the Lord's power rather than to his own experience and the disciples' failure.

Even so, the word *"all things are possible to him who believes"* must not be used as a promise that whatever a person wants will surely come true if only he believes strongly. Faith is not mental power or positive thinking that realizes one's own desires. True faith is knowing who Jesus is and relying on His word and power. God is almighty, but He is not obligated to grant every human wish as it is; He answers according to His own good will and wisdom.

The child's father immediately cried out and confessed, *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* He did not pretend to be a man of perfect and strong faith. While wanting to believe in Jesus and actually relying on Him, he honestly admitted that doubt and fear remained within him. And he did not try to produce even the faith he lacked by himself, but asked Jesus for help.

This confession is not a word without any faith at all. To remain with Jesus and seek His help even while knowing that one's faith is lacking is itself a response of faith. A person weak in faith should not pretend to be strong, but should honestly acknowledge his state before the word of God. Faith is looking not at one's own conviction but at the faithful Jesus, who helps us in our weakness.

Seeing the people come running together, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit. He commanded, *"Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"* Jesus used no special incantation or complicated ritual, nor did He borrow any other authority. He commanded directly as the Son of God, and the demon had to obey His word.

With a final cry, the demon convulsed the child severely and came out. When the child looked as if he were dead, many said that he was dead. People judged by the visible state that everything was over. But Jesus took the child by the hand and

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lifted him up, and the child stood up. The demon's purpose was to destroy the child, but Jesus set him free from oppression and raised him up again.

This event shows that Jesus is the Son of God, who holds the authority to rule over Satan and unclean spirits. But we must not turn this healing into a promise that every believer must experience the same thing in the same way. God can heal today as well according to His will, and believers must pray for the sick. Yet when healing does not come at once, we must not condemn the patient or the family as lacking in faith.

When Jesus and the disciples entered the house, the disciples asked privately, not in front of the people, why they had not been able to cast the demon out. To ask Jesus the reason, without hiding the failure or making excuses, was a needed attitude. Believers, too, when they fail to accomplish what was entrusted to them, must not blame only others or their circumstances, but must examine before the word their own faith and what they are depending on.

Jesus said, *"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."* Prayer is not an incantation that raises human ability; it is an expression of faith that acknowledges one's own inability and relies on the power of God. The disciples may have relied on their past experience of casting out demons and on the authority given to them, but the power of God is not a skill that a person possesses and uses at will whenever needed. A disciple must rely on God and pray at every moment.

Nor is the sheer amount of prayer itself the source of power. Filling up hours of prayer or repeating the same words does not automatically bring about miracles. True prayer is acknowledging that one has no power and seeking God's will and help. The one who prays does not try to control the outcome according to his own will, but believes that God will

work in the best way, and obeys.

This event also shows that a sinner cannot escape from the power of sin and Satan by his own strength. The child could not cast out by himself the demon that oppressed him, and neither his father nor the disciples could set him free. In the same way, no one can remove all the sins written on his heart by his own resolutions and good deeds, by prayers of repentance, or by religious zeal. The only One who can solve the fundamental problem of sin is Jesus Christ.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus accepted the sins of all the people of the world onto Himself and bore them with His own body. And carrying those sins, He was hung on the Cross, shed His blood, and died, receiving all the judgment of sin in our place; and He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming the power of sin, death, and Satan. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift—not because of the size of his faith or any religious merit, but by the righteousness Jesus completed.

Even those who believe the gospel at times discover their own weakness. But the salvation Jesus accomplished does not become incomplete just because our deeds are lacking and our emotions waver. The salvation completed through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection does not change according to human emotions. Instead of looking only at his own faith and losing heart, a believer can look to Jesus Christ, who has already removed all his sins, and pray, *"Help my unbelief!"*

This passage teaches that when human failure is exposed, we must not remain in arguments but come to Jesus. The disciples could not do it and the scribes disputed, but Jesus had

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compassion on the suffering child and set him free with His word. Believers must rely on God in prayer instead of relying on past experience and their own ability, and must lead the suffering in love to the Lord and to the word of the gospel rather than condemning them.

## Jesus repeatedly taught His disciples that He would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise again in three days

*"Then they departed from there and passed through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know it. For He taught His disciples and said to them, 'The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day.' But they did not understand this saying, and were afraid to ask Him" (Mark 9:30–32).*

Jesus and His disciples left the place where He had healed the demon-possessed child and passed through Galilee. The people who had seen the amazing thing Jesus did could have flocked to Him, but this time He did not want His route to be known to the people. It was not that Jesus hid Himself out of fear of people or reluctance to preach the gospel. It was because there was a word He absolutely had to teach His disciples, away for a while from the attention and the commotion of the crowds.

Jesus preached the kingdom of God to great multitudes, healed the sick, and cast out demons. But the disciples were not to understand the mission of Jesus by looking only at miracles and power. The ultimate purpose for which Jesus came to this earth did not lie in solving people's physical problems or becoming a political king in the world. To bear all the sins of

sinners, to receive the judgment in their place, and to accomplish everlasting salvation—this was His most important mission.

Therefore, Jesus concentrated on teaching His disciples rather than on public activity. The disciples were the ones who would witness the death and resurrection of Jesus and preach that gospel to the whole world. If they misunderstood the identity of Jesus and His work of salvation, they would also preach a wrong Christ to people. An evangelist must not have zeal alone; he must first know and believe accurately how Jesus saved sinners.

Jesus said, *"The Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And after He is killed, He will rise the third day."* Earlier, on the way to Caesarea Philippi, He had also taught that He must suffer many things, be rejected by the religious leaders, be killed, and rise again in three days. But because the disciples had not understood, He taught the same thing again. God did not hide the truth because the disciples were slow to understand, but spoke it to them repeatedly.

The word that the Son of Man would be betrayed into the hands of men shows that the death of Jesus would come about not as a vague accident or a natural death, but through people's rejection and evil judgment. Jesus would be arrested through the betrayal of Judas, handed over to the religious leaders, and then nailed to the Cross under the sentence of a Gentile ruler. The sinless Son of God was to be delivered into the hands of sinners and suffer.

But Jesus was not a victim caught in people's schemes and killed against His will. He knew beforehand what would happen to Him, and He gave up His own life in obedience to the plan of salvation the Father had set. The act of those who

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killed Jesus was their own evil sin, but through that evil deed God accomplished the salvation in which Jesus bore the judgment of sinners in their place. God's plan did not turn human sin into something good, but neither could human evil bring down God's plan of salvation.

It is also important that Jesus called Himself *"the Son of Man."* While being the Son of God, He came clothed in a true human body to represent sinners. For the sinless Jesus to bear sin in man's place and die, He had to come to this earth in the flesh. Yet He is not a mere human being, but the Son of God, who would overcome death and rise again.

When Jesus spoke this word, He had already borne on His own body the sins of all the people of the world, with the baptism He had received from John in the Jordan River. The death of Jesus was not a martyrdom that took place apart from sin. By being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He accepted and carried all the sins of the world, and carrying those sins, He had to go to the Cross and receive in sinners' place the punishment they deserved.

If the blood Jesus shed on the Cross shows the judgment of sin, the event of His bearing sins through His baptism makes clear why He was judged on the Cross. If sins had not passed on to Jesus, there would have been no reason for the sinless One to be judged. Jesus bore all the sins of the world and paid the wages of those sins in full on the Cross. Therefore, if we separate the baptism of Jesus from the blood of the Cross, it is hard to understand God's way of salvation fully.

Jesus did not say only that He would be killed; He clearly said, *"After He is killed, He will rise the third day."* The death of the Cross was not the end of salvation or the defeat of Jesus. He was buried, and in three days He rose from the dead, overcoming death, the wages of sin, and showing that He is the

Son of God and the perfect Savior.

The resurrection is God's evidence that the death of Jesus did not fail. Because Jesus paid the wages of sin completely, death could not keep holding Him. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not the story of a prophet who died tragically; it is the good news that the Son of God, who bore all sins and was judged, rose again and completed salvation.

But the disciples did not understand this word. They believed that Jesus was the Christ, the One who would establish the kingdom of God, but they found it hard to accept that the Christ had to be delivered into the hands of men and be killed. The Savior they expected was One who would drive out their enemies and establish a glorious kingdom at once. A Christ who suffers and dies did not match their expectation.

Not long before, the disciples had seen the dazzling glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah had appeared and talked with Jesus, and from heaven had come the voice that He was the beloved Son of God. The word that so glorious a Son of God would be delivered into the hands of men and die must have been all the harder to understand. They had seen the glory of Jesus, but they had not yet realized that the glory that saves sinners is revealed through the sacrifice of the Cross.

The passage records that the disciples not only failed to understand the word but were also afraid to ask. They may have remembered how Peter, trying to stop the death of Jesus, had received the stern rebuke, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"* They may also have been afraid to confirm clearly that Jesus would actually die. Rather than honestly asking about what they did not understand, they kept silent in fear.

We must not be ashamed to ask questions when we do not understand the word of God. If we fill in the content with our

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own thoughts instead of asking, the misunderstanding can grow deeper. Those who teach the faith, likewise, must not ignore or rebuke the one who asks and so shut his mouth. They must explain the word repeatedly until it is understood, and help the questioner confirm the written word for himself.

The disciples' case shows that following Jesus closely and seeing many miracles does not make one understand the gospel automatically. A person may think he knows the Cross of Jesus and yet not know why He had to be baptized by John, carry sins, and die. He may also acknowledge the resurrection as a doctrine and yet not clearly know what it has to do with the remission of his own sins. The gospel is not a familiar religious vocabulary; it is the truth that must be understood accurately according to the word of God and believed with the heart.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus accepted and carried all our sins—past, present, and future; He received all the judgment of those sins on the Cross; and He rose again in three days and completed everlasting salvation. Whoever believes this fact with his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all—not by his own deeds and merits but by the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished—and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again.

Even after being saved, believers may come upon parts of the word of God they do not understand. At such times, instead of putting their own experience and judgment first or avoiding questions out of fear, they must seek the help of the Holy Spirit and learn the word. Just as Jesus repeatedly taught the Cross and the resurrection to His slow-to-understand disciples, God still leads believers into the truth today through His written word.

This passage teaches that the saving work of Jesus takes

precedence over popularity or enthusiasm for miracles. Jesus concentrated not on making many people seek Him but on making His disciples understand the Cross and the resurrection. The church today, likewise, must not set its interest only on activities that gather people or on visible success, but must teach accurately the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished through His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The death of Jesus was not an unforeseen failure, and the resurrection was not a comfort the disciples added later. Jesus knew in advance what would happen to Him and spoke of it many times, and He died and rose again just as He had said. Therefore, sinners must believe in Jesus Christ, who obeyed the Father's will to the end even while being delivered into the hands of men and killed. Whoever believes the completed gospel of the water and the Spirit escapes from sin and judgment and lives in the hope of the resurrection.

## In the kingdom of God, the great person is not the one who puts his position first but the one who serves all and receives the little ones

*"Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, 'What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?' But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.' Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever receives one of these little children in My name*

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*receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.'" (Mark 9:33–37).*

Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum and entered a house. Jesus knew what the disciples had done on the road, but He asked, *"What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?"* This was not a question asked out of ignorance, but a question meant to make the disciples look back on their own thoughts and actions. Rather than rebuking the disciples publicly before the people, Jesus exposed their hearts inside the house and taught them the right way of a disciple.

Just before this, Jesus had told His disciples that He would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise three days after His death. Jesus was speaking of giving Himself up to save sinners, but the disciples argued with one another on the road over who was greater. The heart of Jesus was set on the sacrifice that would save sinners, while the hearts of the disciples were set on their own position and superiority.

The disciples kept silent at Jesus' question because they knew to some extent that what they had argued about was not right before the Lord. People, too, want to be recognized as more important in comparison with others, and yet are ashamed to reveal that desire honestly before God. Outwardly one may say that he follows the Lord and works for the gospel, while inwardly calculating who will be more recognized and who will take the higher place.

After sitting down, Jesus called all twelve disciples and spoke to them. In those days, for a teacher to sit and teach was the manner of formally delivering an important lesson. The disciples' quarrel was not the problem of a few; it was a teaching all twelve disciples had to hear. Jesus said, *"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."*

Jesus did not merely rebuke the fact that they had the desire

to be first; He changed what they were to regard as truly being first. In the world, the one who dominates many people and moves them at his own will is considered great, but in the kingdom of God, the one who humbles himself and serves for the benefit of many is great. The leading place is not a place for enjoying privilege but a place for bearing greater responsibility and serving more.

To become *"servant of all"* does not mean helping only those who are useful to oneself. If we are kind to the powerful and influential while ignoring those who can give us no help at all, that cannot be called the service the Lord spoke of. True service does not choose its objects by weighing a person's position and ability, wealth and background; it seeks that person's good because he is a soul the Lord loves.

But this word must not be used to force unjust sacrifice or submission on anyone. The word to serve all does not mean that a leader may shift his responsibility onto others or take the toil of the weak for granted. Rather, the more one stands in front, the more he must protect and care for others and use the authority entrusted to him for their benefit. Overlooking sin and violence is not service either, so true love also needs wise discernment and right order.

To show this teaching visibly, Jesus took a little child, set him in the midst of the disciples, and held him in His arms. In those days a little child was not a being of high social position or influence, but a weak being who needed the protection and care of adults. The disciples were thinking about who among them was the highest, but Jesus set in their midst a little child, whom they could easily regard as unimportant.

The passage does not teach that a little child is without sin or that a child's thoughts are always right. The focus Jesus showed lies in how we treat the little ones whom people regard

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as low and from whom no repayment can be expected. Jesus did not stand the child at a distance and use him merely as an object lesson; He held him in His own arms. This shows that the service of the kingdom of God must not remain in words and theory, but must be revealed in actions that respect, protect, and actually care for the weak.

Jesus said, *"Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me."* To receive in the name of Jesus is not to care for someone in order to display one's own goodness or win people's praise, but to accept that person as a precious soul who belongs to Jesus. To treasure a little one for the Lord's sake, even when no gain will come back to oneself—this is the attitude that receives in the name of Jesus.

Jesus also said that to receive Him is to receive God the Father, who sent Him. Jesus is not merely a human teacher who teaches humility and service; He is the Son sent by God the Father. Therefore, to accept the words of Jesus and believe in Him is to believe in and receive God, who sent Him. Conversely, no one can claim to serve God rightly while rejecting Jesus.

Jesus Himself fulfilled the service He taught. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth in the flesh to save sinners, and bore the sins of all the people of the world on His own body with the baptism He received from John. And carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the judgment of sin in our place; and He was buried and rose from the dead in three days. The highest One came down to the lowest place, served sinners, and gave them life.

No one receives the remission of sin as a merit for serving everyone well or receiving little children. Salvation is not a reward for human humility and service; it is the grace received by believing the righteousness of God, which Jesus completed

with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection. Whoever believes this gospel with his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. Service is not a price paid to obtain salvation, but the fruit of faith borne by the already saved in gratitude for the grace they have received.

Even within the church, it is easy to judge who is greater by office and years of religious life, by the ability to teach the word, and by the size of visible activities. But within the gospel, the one who stands in front is not the one who exalts himself, but the one who helps others hear the word rightly, waits for those weak in faith, and serves the community in unseen places. In the work of preaching the gospel, not only those who preach or teach but also those who pray, help, care, and carry out whatever is needed are all used preciously.

The word about receiving a little child must also be applied today to protecting actual children safely and respecting them. It must also be revealed in the attitude that treasures those who have just come to church, the poor, the sick, the disabled, those who receive no attention from society, and those who have no ability to return help. We must not regard them merely as records of evangelism or objects of service, but respect them as persons and serve them in love so that they can hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

This passage makes us look back on whom we are serving before asking who is great. The disciples looked to the high place, but Jesus pointed to the lowest place and to the little ones. Those who have received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not let their hearts be captured by exalting their own name and position, but must humble themselves, serve souls, and receive even those who

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seem insignificant as if receiving Jesus. That is the true greatness of the kingdom of God, which Jesus, the highest One, Himself walked and showed to His saved disciples.

## We must cast away the desire to monopolize the name of Jesus and the attitude that takes sin lightly, and have peace with one another within the gospel

*"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. 'But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' 'For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice*

*will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.'" (Mark 9:38–50).*

John reported that the disciples had forbidden a man who was casting out demons in the name of Jesus. The reason they stopped him was not that he was using the name of Jesus, but *"because he does not follow us."* Just before this, the disciples had argued over who was greater, and now they even tried to stop the ministry of a man who did not belong to the same company as themselves. Rather than putting Jesus at the center, they had put at the center the group and the order they themselves recognized.

Jesus said, *"Do not forbid him."* For although that man did not belong to the company of the twelve disciples, he was doing a mighty work by relying on the name of Jesus. Jesus said that one who works a miracle in His name can hardly speak evil of Him soon afterward, and He said, *"He who is not against us is on our side."* The disciples had made following themselves the standard, but Jesus looked at whether the man was against the Christ.

This word, however, does not mean that as long as someone uses the name of Jesus, every teaching and action should be approved without discernment. The word to beware of false prophets and false gospels is also clearly written in the Scriptures. But we must not hastily define a person as an enemy merely because his affiliation and manner of working differ from ours, nor think that our own group can monopolize what God is doing. We need the patience that firmly keeps the truth of the gospel and yet does not rashly condemn the other person, giving him the opportunity to realize the truth.

Jesus does not forget even small acts of service. In the word *"Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name,*

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*because you belong to Christ,"* what matters is not the price of the water but the reason it is given. If someone hands over a cup of water acknowledging that a person belongs to Christ, that is service flowing from a heart directed toward the Lord. Even an act that seems insignificant to people, if done out of love for Christ, the Lord remembers and rewards.

But the good deed of giving a cup of water does not become the price that buys the remission of sin. A sinner is not saved by piling up good deeds; he receives the remission of sin by believing the salvation Jesus Christ completed. The reward spoken of here is not a payment for obtaining salvation; it means that the Lord gladly receives the act of serving in love a person who belongs to Christ. Salvation is received by grace, and the reward for service concerns the fruit borne by the saved as they live by faith.

Jesus then warned against the action that is the exact opposite of serving the little ones. In the word *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble,"* the little ones refer not only to children; they include those who believe in Jesus and yet are weak and do not look impressive to people. To cause someone to stumble means not simply any action that hurts another's feelings, but shaking his faith so that he falls away from the Lord and is dragged into sin and unbelief.

Blurring the gospel with false teaching, oppressing the weak by using spiritual authority, pushing people out of the church with insult and discrimination, or making others unable to believe the gospel through hypocritical behavior—these things can cause a little one to stumble. Jesus said that it would be better to have a great millstone hung around one's neck and be thrown into the sea than to do such things. This is not a command to inflict such punishment on anyone; it is a strong

warning that reveals how severely God regards the sin of destroying one little soul.

Jesus did not point out only the sin of causing others to stumble; He said that each person must deal decisively with the sin within himself. He said to cut off the hand if it causes one to sin, to cut off the foot if it causes one to sin, and to pluck out the eye if it causes one to sin. The hand represents what a person does, the foot the path he walks, and the eye the desire with which he looks and covets. It means that we must not take lightly the relationships and habits, the places and desires that lead us into sin, but must cut them off decisively.

This word must not be taken literally as a command to mutilate one's own body. Even if the hand is cut off, the covetousness of the heart can remain, and even if the eye is plucked out, the evil thoughts in the heart do not disappear. Jesus had already taught that the sins that defile a person come out of the heart. Therefore, the word to cast away the hand, the foot, and the eye means not to treat the heart and the actions that give birth to sin as matters less important than life, but to turn from them thoroughly.

Nor does anyone enter everlasting life by the merit of afflicting his own body or striving not to sin. Human beings need a Savior because they cannot remove all the sins of their hearts by their own strength. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore the sins of all the people of the world on His own body; and carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving all the punishment in our place. And He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation.

Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and obtains everlasting

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life. The saved do not mutilate their bodies out of fear of sin; following the help of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of the word, they cast away the thoughts and habits that lead them into sin. Remembering the grace of Jesus, who solved all their sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, they choose the will of God over the desires of the flesh.

That Jesus spoke of the unquenchable fire of hell and the worm that does not die shows that hell really exists and that God's judgment on sin is eternal and severe. Hell is not a religious symbol invented to threaten people. God hates evil, and He judges in the lake of fire those who are not written in the Book of Life and those who follow evil and refuse to turn back to the end. Therefore, no one should take his own sins and the judgment of God lightly, but must believe with the heart the salvation God accomplished through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

In the word *"Everyone will be seasoned with fire,"* the fire does not mean a refining fire that tests faith or purifies. It refers to the unquenchable fire of hell, of which Jesus warned repeatedly in the preceding words. If a person follows the evil thoughts arising in his heart, planning and doing evil, and refuses to turn back before the word of God to the end, he receives the judgment that corresponds to his deeds. Anyone who claims to have received the remission of sin and yet despises God, keeps chasing the desires of the flesh, and stands against the gospel and the Church can be cast away and come to judgment; therefore, no one should regard this warning as a word that has nothing to do with himself.

Jesus then spoke about salt. Just as salt keeps food from decaying, faith that believes in the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit keeps our hearts and our faith from

being corrupted by the thoughts of the flesh and the evil of the world. When we bind our hearts firmly with the word of God, as if steeping them in salt, we discern between the thoughts of the Spirit and the thoughts of the flesh that arise within us, and choose and follow the thoughts in which God delights.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body; carrying those sins, He was judged on the Cross, shedding His blood; and He completed our salvation by rising from the dead. This gospel is not a word that teaches that since we have received the remission of sin, we may now live according to the desires of the flesh. Rather, it is the word of life that leads us to believe in the grace of the Lord who saved us from all sins, to cast away the thoughts and actions in which God does not delight, and to live following the thoughts of the Spirit.

For salt to lose its flavor means to claim to have received the remission of sin and yet take the word of God lightly, keep following the thoughts and desires of the flesh, and abandon the duty of faith. If a person keeps stubbornly holding on to wrong thoughts and actions, his faith becomes corrupt, and in the end he becomes one who stands against the gospel and the Church. Therefore, even the saved must fear God, examine their thoughts and deeds before the word, and the moment they discover anything in which the Lord does not delight, cast it away and turn back at once.

Finally, Jesus said, *"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another."* This is a command to set the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit firmly in our hearts, to solve the problem of sin with that gospel, and to be reconciled to God. And born-again brothers and sisters must not put their own thoughts and pride first, but must cast away wrong deeds and love, cherish, and be at peace with one

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another within the gospel.

Peace is not compromising the truth or covering over wrongs. It is acknowledging one's own faults by the standard of the word of God and turning from them, and exhorting the other person in love so that he may stand upright in faith. We must not treat our brothers and sisters as easy targets in the flesh, or oppress them and cause them to stumble. Those who have received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must treat even one little one as a precious soul who belongs to the Lord, and must serve and protect one another and become one within the gospel. This is the faith that keeps the salt of the gospel in the heart and lives at peace with God and with the brothers and sisters.

This passage begins with the disciples stopping another man on the ground that "he does not follow us," and ends with the word *"have peace with one another."* Jesus regarded as important not the competitive spirit that seeks to enlarge one's own side, but honoring the name of Christ, protecting the little ones, and decisively casting away the sin within oneself. Those who have received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not regard the gospel as the possession of their own group, but must treat every soul as precious, carry out small acts of service in the name of Christ, and live at peace with one another within the truth. ✉

# Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 9

## [Question] 1. Briefly sum up the main content of Mark chapter 9.

Mark chapter 9 begins with the event on the Mount of Transfiguration, which shows that Jesus is the Son of God and the One who will appear in glory. Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain, and He was transfigured in glorious form before them. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus, and out of the cloud came the voice of God, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* This shows that the Law and the Prophets ultimately point to Jesus Christ, and that the final authority the disciples must follow is the word of Jesus. It also shows in advance the glory in which believers will rise again and live with the Lord in spiritual bodies.

Coming down from the mountain, Jesus taught concerning the word that Elijah must come first. He said that Elijah had already come but people had treated him however they wished, and that the Son of Man also must suffer many things and be treated with contempt, as it is written.

At the foot of the mountain, a father whose son had a mute spirit was seeking help. The disciples could not cast out the demon, but Jesus said, *"All things are possible to him who believes,"* and rebuked the unclean spirit and made the child whole. The child's father confessed, *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* Jesus taught His disciples that this kind could come out by nothing but prayer, showing that the work of God must

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be carried out not by human experience or ability but by faith and prayer.

As He passed through Galilee, Jesus taught again that He would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise three days after His death. But the disciples did not understand this word and were afraid even to ask. Without understanding the words of the Cross and the resurrection, they were arguing on the road over who was greater.

So Jesus taught that whoever desires to be first must become last of all and a servant. Holding a little child in His arms, He said that to receive one such little one in His name is to receive Him and God who sent Him. The great person in the kingdom of God is not the one who takes a high place and is served, but the one who humbles himself and serves the weak and the little.

Also, when the disciples forbade a man who did not follow them from casting out demons in the name of Jesus, Jesus told them not to forbid him. He said that he who is not against Him is on His side, and that even the small act of giving a cup of water to one who belongs to Christ will by no means lose its reward. Conversely, He warned that causing one little one who believes in Him to stumble is a very heavy sin.

Finally, Jesus said that if the hand or the foot or the eye causes one to sin, it is better to cut it off or pluck it out, teaching that the problems of sin and stumbling must be dealt with decisively. This does not mean actually mutilating the body; it is a solemn word that sinful thoughts and actions that hinder everlasting life and the kingdom of God must never be taken lightly but must be cut off. Jesus warned of the unquenchable fire of hell, and told His disciples not to lose the flavor of salt but to have peace with one another.

Mark chapter 9 thus contains the divine glory, the suffering,

and the resurrection of Jesus; the need for faith and prayer; the disciple's attitude of humbling himself and serving; the attitude of respecting other believers and not causing them to stumble; and the teaching that we must cut off sin decisively and be at peace with one another.

## [Question] 2. In Mark 9:1, what did Jesus say to the crowd?

Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."*

This word means that some of those present would see the power and the glory of the kingdom of God revealed before they died. In the transfiguration event that follows, Peter, James, and John saw the gloriously transfigured form of Jesus.

## [Question] 3. Mark 9:2—where was the *"high mountain"* that Jesus went up with the three disciples?

Mark does not give the name of the mountain but records only that He *"led them up on a high mountain apart,"* so its exact location cannot be determined.

In long church tradition, Mount Tabor, southeast of Galilee, has been regarded as the Mount of Transfiguration. But the summit of Mount Tabor is comparatively low, and a fortress is known to have stood there at that time, so it is hard to see it as the high mountain where Jesus stayed with His disciples *"apart."*

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Since the preceding events of Mark chapter 8 took place in the region of Caesarea Philippi, and the highest and most prominent mountain in that vicinity is Mount Hermon, the mountain was probably Mount Hermon or one of the peaks of its range. The Scriptures, however, do not record the name of the mountain directly.

The most accurate answer, therefore, is that the place was an unnamed high mountain, with Mount Tabor suggested by tradition and Mount Hermon by geography. The center of what the Scriptures emphasize lies not in the exact name of the mountain but in the fact that there Jesus revealed to the three disciples the glory He possesses as the Son of God.

## [Question] 4. What does the miracle of the Mount of Transfiguration, recorded in Mark 9:2–8, show?

The miracle of the Mount of Transfiguration is the event in which the glory of the Son of God, hidden within Jesus who came in human form, was revealed to the disciples for a moment. That Jesus was transfigured before the disciples and His clothes shone whiter than anything in the world could whiten them shows that He is not a mere prophet or great teacher but the Son of God, possessing divine glory and power. It also allowed the three disciples to see in advance *"the kingdom of God present with power,"* of which He had spoken, and it prefigures the resurrection of Jesus and the glory of the kingdom of God that will be revealed.

Moses, who appeared on the mountain, represents the Law, and Elijah represents the Prophets and the ministry of the promised preparer of the way. That the Law and the Prophets appeared together with Jesus shows that all the words of the

Old Testament and God's promises of salvation point to Jesus Christ and are fulfilled in Him. In the words that follow, the promised ministry of Elijah is connected with the way-preparing ministry of John the Baptist. John the Baptist not only prepared the way before Jesus, but by baptizing Him he revealed that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Peter, so greatly afraid that he did not know what to say, said that he would build a tabernacle each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This shows that at that time Peter was placing Jesus side by side with Moses and Elijah and had not yet fully realized His unique authority and His work of salvation. Then out of the cloud came the voice of God, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* God Himself testified that Jesus does not stand in the same position as Moses or Elijah, but is the beloved Son of God, whose words everyone must hear, believe, and follow.

After the voice was heard, Moses and Elijah were no longer seen, and only Jesus remained. This teaches that the testimony of the Law and the Prophets finally converges on Jesus Christ, and that a sinner receives the remission of sin not by the works of the Law or human merit but only by believing the salvation Jesus completed.

Yet the glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration did not itself remove man's sins. Jesus, the Lord of glory, had already borne all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist; carrying those sins, He was judged and died on the Cross, and He completed salvation by rising from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of all sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit and is born again, and at the resurrection will be transformed into an incorruptible, spiritual body and live in glory with the Lord.

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The miracle of the Mount of Transfiguration therefore shows that Jesus, who was about to undergo the suffering of the Cross, is the glorious Son of God, and that beyond His death lie the resurrection and the glory of the kingdom of God. At the same time, it teaches that the center of faith lies not in human thoughts or legalistic works, but in hearing and believing the words of Jesus and the gospel of the salvation He accomplished, according to God's command: *"Hear Him!"*

## [Question] 5. What change does Mark 9:3 record as appearing in Jesus on the mountain?

When Jesus was transfigured before the disciples, His clothes shone, becoming so exceedingly white that no launderer in the world could have whitened them like that.

Mark 9:3 records, *"His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them."* This was not a change produced by washing or natural light; it was a supernatural change in which the holy glory of the Son of God, hidden within Jesus, was revealed outwardly.

## [Question] 6. Mark 9:4—who were the ones talking with Jesus in His transfigured form?

The ones talking with the transfigured Jesus were Elijah and Moses.

Mark 9:4 records, *"And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus."* Moses is the figure who represents the Law and Elijah the Prophets, and their

appearing together with Jesus shows that the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament point to Jesus Christ and to the work of salvation He would accomplish.

## [Question] 7. In Mark 9:5–6, what proposal did Peter make to Jesus?

Peter proposed to Jesus that they build three tabernacles there: one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

He said, *"Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."* But Peter, seeing the glory of Jesus and the appearance of Moses and Elijah, was so greatly afraid that he spoke like this without even knowing what he was saying.

## [Question] 8. Mark 9:7–8—what did the voice out of the cloud testify concerning Jesus?

The voice of God heard out of the cloud testified of Jesus, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"*

This word was God's own declaration that Jesus is not one prophet like Moses or Elijah, but the beloved Son of God, whose words everyone must hear, believe, and follow. Peter had said that he would build a tabernacle each for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, but God did not place the three in the same position; He commanded them to hear the words of Jesus alone.

After the voice was heard, when the disciples looked around, Moses and Elijah were not seen, and only Jesus was with them. This shows that all the words testified by Moses, who represents the Law, and Elijah, who represents the

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Prophets, are directed to Jesus Christ, and that the final authority of salvation and faith belongs to Jesus, the Son of God.

## [Question] 9. Mark 9:9–10—what did Jesus command His disciples as they came down the mountain?

As they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded the disciples to tell no one what they had seen on the mountain until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

The disciples kept this word to themselves and did not make it known to others, but they questioned one another about what *"the rising from the dead"* meant. This shows that even though they had seen the glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, they did not yet clearly understand the saving work in which Jesus would die and rise from the dead.

Jesus had them keep this hidden until He rose again so that people would not look only at the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration and misunderstand Him as a political king who would bring worldly glory. The glory of the Mount of Transfiguration had to be understood rightly through His suffering and His resurrection from death.

## [Question] 10. Mark 9:11–13—what did Jesus answer concerning the scribes' teaching that Elijah must come first?

After seeing Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples asked Jesus, *"Why do the scribes say that Elijah must*

*come first?"* Jesus acknowledged that the scribes' word that Elijah comes first and restores all things was based on God's prophecy. But at the same time He taught that the word written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt, must also be fulfilled.

Jesus then said, *"Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him."* The Elijah who came first here does not mean that the Elijah of the Old Testament had been reborn in the flesh; it refers to John the Baptist, who prepared the way of Jesus with the same mission and power as Elijah. He preached repentance to the people and prepared the way for them to come to Jesus Christ, but he was seized by Herod and Herodias, imprisoned, and finally put to death. This is what the word that people did to him whatever they wished means.

That John the Baptist restores all things does not mean that he himself saved anyone. He prepared the way by leading people to acknowledge their sins before the Law and turn to Jesus, the Savior. And Jesus bore all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John; carrying those sins, He was judged and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. John the Baptist fulfilled his mission by testifying of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, so that the gospel of salvation would be clearly revealed.

Jesus' answer therefore teaches that the prophecy concerning Elijah had already been fulfilled through the ministry of John the Baptist, and that just as people rejected him, so Jesus, the Son of Man of whom he testified, would also receive many sufferings and much contempt.

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## [Question] 11. Mark 9:17–22—what symptoms and sufferings was the child with the mute spirit undergoing?

The child was seized by a mute spirit and could not speak. Whenever the spirit seized him, it threw him down; the child foamed at the mouth, gnashed his teeth, and was gradually pining away.

When people brought the child to Jesus, the spirit saw Him and immediately convulsed the child. He fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. This suffering was not momentary; it had continued from childhood.

The demon had even thrown him into the fire and into the water many times to destroy him. Unable to govern his own body and behavior, the child was under constant threat to his life, and his father was also going through deep despair and suffering that no human strength could resolve.

## [Question] 12. Mark 9:19—what did Jesus say when He knew that the disciples had failed to heal the child with the mute spirit?

Jesus said, *"O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."*

Jesus rebuked not only the disciples but also the unbelief of the people who were disputing without faith and of that whole generation. The disciples had already received authority over unclean spirits, but they failed to heal the child because they did not fully rely on Jesus, who had given them that authority.

Yet Jesus did not stop at rebuking their unbelief; He said, *"Bring him to Me."* This shows that problems man cannot

solve, and even our lack of faith, must be brought to Jesus, and that the power that delivered the child from the power of the evil spirit and healed him came only from the word and the authority of Jesus.

## [Question] 13. Mark 9:22—what does the phrase *"If You can do anything"* show about the faith of the child's father?

The words *"If You can do anything"* reveal the weak and wavering faith of the child's father, who could not fully trust the power of Jesus.

He had brought his son to the disciples to be healed, but he had seen them fail to cast out the demon. Because of this failure and his long suffering, he had come to doubt whether Jesus could really heal his son. So instead of asking with confidence in the power of Jesus, he pleaded that, if possible, Jesus would have compassion on them and help them.

Yet his words did not mean total unbelief. Though his faith was weak and mixed with doubt, he did not give up on his son; he brought him to Jesus and sought the Lord's compassion and help. This shows that even a person whose faith is lacking must not hide his doubt or pretend to be strong in faith, but must come to Jesus just as he is, in his weakness, and ask for His help.

## [Question] 14. Mark 9:23–24—what did the word *"All things are possible to him who believes"* demand?

This word demanded that the child's father not limit the

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power of Jesus by the size of the problem or by his own experience, but believe in Jesus, who can do all things.

The child's father had said, *"If You can do anything,"* doubting whether Jesus could heal his son. So Jesus said, *"If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."* He pointed out that the problem lay not in any lack of power in Jesus, but in the heart of the person who did not fully believe that power.

But this word does not mean that a person can achieve whatever he wants by his own will if only he has strong conviction. The object and the ground of faith are not human will or positive thinking, but Jesus and His word. True faith does not rely on one's own ability and merit; it acknowledges that the Lord is able, and entrusts oneself to His will and authority.

The child's father immediately cried out, *"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* He did not hide the fact that his faith was lacking; he admitted it as it was and asked Jesus for help. This shows that we do not first manufacture a perfect, unshakable faith and then come to the Lord; we must bring even our doubt and weakness before Him and seek His help.

What Jesus demanded, therefore, was not an attitude that boasts of the size of its faith, but the faith that comes to Him relying on His power and compassion, while acknowledging its own inability and lack of faith.

## [Question] 15. Mark 9:25–27—what command did Jesus give to the deaf and dumb spirit?

Rebuking the spirit, Jesus commanded, *"Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"*

The spirit cried out, convulsed the child greatly, and came out. The child became like a dead person, so that many said he was dead; but when Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, he arose.

This shows that even the deaf and dumb spirit could not but obey the command of Jesus at once, and that Jesus delivered the child completely from the power of the evil spirit so that he would never be seized by that demon again.

## [Question] 16. Mark 9:28–29—how did Jesus explain why the disciples could not cast out the demon?

When Jesus went into the house, the disciples asked Him privately why they had not been able to cast out the demon. Jesus answered, *"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."*

The disciples had before received from Jesus authority over unclean spirits and had experience of casting out demons. But they could not carry out spiritual work by relying only on past experience or on the authority given to them. They had to keep relying on God, who had given them that authority, and seek His help in prayer.

Prayer here is not an incantation for casting out demons or a merit that raises human ability. Prayer is an expression of faith that acknowledges that one can do nothing by one's own strength and relies on the authority and help of God. The reason the disciples could not cast out the demon, therefore, was not that their skill or words were lacking, but that they lacked the faith that relies wholly on God through prayer.

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## [Question] 17. Mark 9:30–32—what did Jesus teach His disciples as they passed through Galilee?

As they passed through Galilee, Jesus taught His disciples that He would be delivered into the hands of men and be killed, and that He would rise again three days after His death.

That Jesus did not want anyone to know His movements at this time was because He was concentrating not on performing miracles before great crowds but on teaching His disciples the coming suffering and the work of salvation. The disciples had seen the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration and the power that cast out demons, but they did not understand the word that the Christ had to be delivered into the hands of men and die.

The death of Jesus was not an accidental event in which He was helplessly seized and defeated by people. Jesus was saying in advance that He would bear all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and that carrying those sins, He would receive the judgment of sin and die on the Cross and complete salvation by rising from the dead. Therefore, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the center of the plan of salvation God has established.

But the disciples did not understand this word and were afraid even to ask Jesus what it meant. This shows that they expected the glorious Christ but could not yet accept the Christ who would suffer and die. We, therefore, must not look only to the glory and power of Jesus, but must rightly know and believe the word of the salvation He completed through His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection from death.

## [Question] 18. Mark 9:33–37—explain the dispute that arose among the disciples on the road to Capernaum and the teaching Jesus gave concerning it.

On the way to Capernaum, the disciples disputed with one another over who among them was the greatest. Just before this, Jesus had told them that He would be delivered into the hands of men, be killed, and rise again in three days, but the disciples, failing to understand that word, were putting their own position and honor first.

When Jesus arrived at the house in Capernaum and asked what they had discussed on the road, the disciples could say nothing. They were ashamed, for they knew that what they had argued about did not accord with the will of Jesus.

Jesus sat down, called the twelve, and taught them, *"If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."* The great person in the kingdom of God is not the one who stands above others to be served and recognized, but the one who humbles himself and serves others. This is the principle of the kingdom of God, which overturns the order of power and honor the world speaks of.

Then Jesus took a little child, set him in the midst of the disciples, and held him in His arms. In those days a little child was a weak being, without high social position or influence, who needed the protection and help of others. By holding the child in His arms, Jesus showed that the disciples must not keep close only to those who can benefit or repay them, but must receive in love even those who are low and weak and from whom no return can be expected.

Jesus said that whoever receives one such little child in His name receives Him, and that whoever receives Him receives

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God who sent Him. This does not mean that the little child itself becomes the object or the merit of salvation; it means that to believe in Jesus and, according to His will, to receive the low and the weak is to serve the Lord Himself.

This event therefore teaches that a disciple must abandon the desire to rise above others and must humble himself and serve all. The truly great person in the kingdom of God is not the one who boasts of his position, but the one who, like a little child, does not put forward his own merits, believes the word of the Lord purely, and loves and serves the weak in the name of Jesus.

## [Question] 19. Mark 9:38–42—what did John report to Jesus, and how did Jesus answer?

John said to Jesus, *"Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us."* That man was casting out demons in the name of Jesus, but since he was not one who went about with the twelve disciples, John and the other disciples stopped him.

In John's words appears an exclusive way of thinking that would confine the work belonging to Jesus within their own company. The disciples had argued earlier over who was the greatest, and now they refused to acknowledge the ministry of a man who did not follow them. However, the Lord's work does not belong to the disciples simply because of their position, nor does it belong to any particular group, and the source of authority is not the disciples, but Jesus.

Jesus said, *"Do not forbid him."* He taught that no one who works a miracle by relying on His name can soon afterward

speak evil of Him, and that *"he who is not against us is on our side."* This means that a person who believes in Jesus and acts in His name must not be rejected or hindered merely because he does not belong to one's own group. It does not mean, however, that every teaching and action is right as long as the name of Jesus is spoken; we must discern by the word whether he acts as one belonging to Jesus and the gospel.

Jesus went on to say that whoever gives the disciples even a cup of water because they belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. God does not look only at great works that stand out before people; He remembers and repays even small and ordinary acts of service done in faith and love for Christ.

Conversely, He warned that causing even one of the little ones who believe in Him to stumble is a very heavy sin. He said that it would be better for such a person to have a great millstone hung around his neck and be thrown into the sea. This shows how severe it is before God to despise a person who is weak in faith or regarded as small by people, and to destroy his faith or drive him away from the gospel.

Jesus' answer therefore teaches that the disciples must not rashly stop others by putting forward their own group and position, but must treasure those who belong to Christ and faithfully carry out even small acts of service. At the same time, it reminds us to guard our words and actions so as not to cause other believers to stumble, and to protect weak souls and build them up in faith.

## [Question] 20. What is What is the word of Jesus concerning stumbling, recorded in Mark 9:43–48?

Jesus said that if the hand or the foot or the eye causes one

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to sin, it should be cut off or plucked out. He said that it is better to enter everlasting life and the kingdom of God maimed, lame, or with one eye than to be cast into hell with two hands, two feet, and two eyes intact. Jesus gave the solemn warning that in hell *"Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched."*

This word is not a command to actually cut off hands and feet and pluck out eyes. Removing one part of the body does not remove the sins that come out of the heart. Jesus was teaching with a strong expression how decisively a person must deal with sin and stumbling. However precious and profitable something that leads us into sin may seem, if it causes us to lose everlasting life, it must be cut off boldly.

The hand is the instrument with which a person actually does what he has planned; the foot is the instrument with which he walks to the paths and places he has chosen; and the eye indicates what he looks at and takes into his heart. To cut off the hand, therefore, is to cast away evil plans and deeds; to cut off the foot is to turn from the paths and places that lead to sin; and to pluck out the eye is to refuse to follow greed, lust, and wrong judgment.

Connected with verse 42 before it, the words and actions that cause the little ones who believe in Jesus to stumble must also be cast away decisively. We must not let our pride and greed, or wrong teaching or behavior, make a weak person misunderstand the gospel or fall from faith. For the judgment of God awaits those who take sin lightly and continue to follow it.

This does not mean, however, that a person washes away his sins or obtains everlasting life by the act of disciplining his hands, feet, and eyes. The salvation that removes man's sins was completed when Jesus bore all the sins of all mankind with

the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of all sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit and is born again.

Even the righteous who have received the remission of sin must not go on following the thoughts and temptations of the flesh. It is not that we afflict our bodies as a condition for obtaining salvation; rather, to keep the life and faith we have already received and not to cause other souls to stumble, we must discern by the word and cast away the thoughts and actions that lead us into sin. This word, therefore, is Jesus' solemn warning to count everlasting life most precious and to cut off decisively, however small it may be, whatever causes sin and stumbling and harms that life.

## [Question] 21. What does Jesus mean in verse 49 by saying that everyone *"will be seasoned with fire"*?

The word *"Everyone will be seasoned with fire"* means that everyone will stand before the holy judgment of God, and that sin will surely receive the judgment of fire. Just as salt sprinkled evenly over food soaks into it, so the fiery judgment of God can neither be avoided nor hidden from; it comes thoroughly upon each person. This is what the strong figure expresses.

The *"fire"* in this word is connected with the unquenchable fire of hell spoken of just before. Here the fire does not mean a process that refines faith through hardship or purifies a person. It refers to the final judgment that will come upon those who take sin and stumbling lightly and do not turn back to God. Seen in connection with the word *"Their worm does not die*

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*And the fire is not quenched,"* this is not a purgatory-like process of becoming clean after suffering for a while, but a warning of the severe and continuing judgment on sin.

The word *"everyone"* shows that no one is unrelated to the judgment of God. Every person is born with sin and cannot remove that sin by himself, and therefore deserves the judgment of hell from the beginning. No human position, religious practice, good deed, or self-righteousness can escape this judgment of fire.

But God completed the salvation that delivers sinners from judgment through the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus bore all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received in our place the fiery judgment for those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel with his heart receives the remission of all sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit and is born again, and escapes the judgment of condemnation through the salvation Jesus accomplished.

This does not mean, however, that the righteous who have received the remission of sin may take this warning lightly. Believers must know how severe the judgment of God is, and must not simply follow the evil thoughts that rise from the flesh. They must guard their hearts with the word and the gospel, cast away the actions that lead to sin, and live in the fear of God so as not to cause other souls to stumble.

The word *"will be seasoned with fire,"* therefore, is a warning that God's judgment on sin comes thoroughly and unavoidably upon everyone. At the same time, it carries the meaning that we must believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ, who bore that judgment in our place, and within that faith cast away sin and stumbling decisively as we live.

## [Question] 22. In Mark 9:50, what did Jesus teach His disciples through the figure of salt?

Jesus taught that just as salt keeps food from decaying, the disciples must keep in their hearts the faith that believes in the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit, so that their hearts and their faith would not become corrupt.

*"Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another" (Mark 9:50).*

In the hearts of the disciples, too, the thoughts of the Spirit and the thoughts of the flesh arise together. The one who keeps the word of the gospel in his heart like salt discerns between the two kinds of thoughts and chooses and follows the way that pleases God rather than the way profitable to his own desires. The faith that believes and obeys the word of God plays the role of the salt that keeps the heart and faith from decay.

For salt to lose its flavor means to claim to have received the remission of sin and yet take the word of God lightly, keep following the thoughts and desires of the flesh, and abandon the duty of faith. We must not make the fact of having been saved an excuse for living according to the flesh, nor stubbornly persist in wrong thoughts and actions and stand against the gospel and the Church. A disciple must fear God, examine his thoughts and actions before the word, and when he finds anything in which the Lord does not delight, cast it away and turn back.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, 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 our salvation by rising from the dead. A disciple must be reconciled to God by firmly believing this gospel of the water

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and the Spirit in his heart, and, remembering the grace of the remission of sin he has received, must also be at peace with his brothers and sisters.

The word *"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another,"* therefore, is the teaching to set the word of God and the gospel of the water and the Spirit firmly in our hearts, to cast away the thoughts of the flesh and wrong deeds, and to love, cherish, and serve one another within the gospel. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

# We will live with the Lord in the kingdom of heaven in spiritual bodies

**< Mark 9:1-8 >**

**"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves."**

The summer weather is very hot. Even in this heat, every department is working hard. One team may seem better off than another, but if we put ourselves in each other's place, everyone is equally worn and hard-pressed. Even so, we cannot but

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prepare for and carry out the work of God. We work knowing that just to be alive and not dead is something to be thankful for, and that even to breathe like this is something to be thankful for.

How good it would be if the work of God suddenly made great progress one day and were all accomplished at once! But God does not accomplish everything at once; He accomplishes it little by little. The work is done little by little. A little is done here and a little there, and so it is gathered and gathered into one whole. In the work each of you has now been given there is also a little progress at a time, and as it is gathered, we serve the Lord and we ourselves live. That is why we work even when it is hot, and even when we are not efficient.

In today's passage, Jesus took three disciples—Peter, James, and John—with Him at important moments. This time also He went up on a high mountain with these three disciples. But when He went up the mountain, Moses and Elijah suddenly appeared. How startled the disciples must have been! Moreover, the clothes of Jesus turned dazzlingly white. The Scriptures say, *"His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3)*.

The face and form of Jesus, and even His clothes, were changed so that they shone all over, and the disciples were so afraid that they could hardly come to their senses. Then a voice was heard from heaven. It was the voice saying, *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!"* But the disciples, because of the amazing sight they saw with their eyes—because Jesus was transfigured and Moses and Elijah appeared—were so completely beside themselves that they could hardly even hear that voice properly.

## *"It is good for us to be here"*

The disciples saw this amazing sight and were beside themselves with delight. So Peter said, *"It is good for us to be here" (Mark 9:5)*—let us build three tabernacles, one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah, and let us also stay and live there with the Lord. The glorious place on the mountain was so good that he did not want to go down.

In fact, I think I know how he felt. I too have a burning desire to set up a place to stay somewhere cool and spend this sweltering summer there until it is all over. Once you go down the mountain, the first worry is what to eat today—a mountain of worries. With twelve disciples following, the worry over breakfast, lunch, and supper never ends. So I can understand Peter's heart, wanting to remain in that glory on the mountain.

Come to think of it, our life is truly a succession of eating. We eat a meal, come and worship, and in a little while we eat again. It would not be far wrong to say that we are born to eat, live eating, and die. Yet when you try fasting and praying, you find how slowly the twenty-four hours of a day pass. Drinking only water, there is no need to go to the bathroom and no cup of coffee to drink; when you do not eat, your things-to-do shrink that much. So we live day after day bound to this business of the flesh, eating and drinking.

## We too will be transformed into spiritual bodies and live with the Lord

But there is a deep meaning in Jesus' showing His transfigured form on the Mount of Transfiguration in this way. It shows that believers like you and me today will be transformed

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into spiritual bodies when the Lord comes again at the last day, and will live together in the Lord's kingdom. Right now you and I have skin that gets sick and wounded, and we have imperfect bodies. But those bodies will be completely changed into incorruptible bodies, spiritual bodies, whole bodies that feel no pain.

That body is a body that passes even through walls; it is a body that reaches wherever it wants to go the moment it so much as thinks of it. The Lord showed His disciples that we will be transformed into just such a body. That is why the disciples of Jesus were so astonished. Jesus told them to tell no one of this until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

But the disciples could not forget their astonishment, and after the Lord rose from the dead, they told others about it. They told how our Lord had gone up the mountain and been utterly changed; how even the color of His clothes had changed and His whole form had changed, shining all over; how a voice had been heard from heaven saying that this was His Son and that they should hear Him; and how they had seen Moses and Elijah appear together. That is how unforgettable an astonishment that sight was to the disciples.

We live like this now, but in the days to come we will be changed to be like the Lord. Moses and Elijah also appeared already in such transformed forms. The Lord showed us that when we go to His kingdom, we too will live transformed like that. You and I, too, after working on this earth for a little while and then departing, will surely become so. Right now it is hard enough just to keep living like this, but before us lies the kingdom of heaven, where we will live with the Lord in spiritual bodies.

## Let us preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit with all our strength

Whether the weather is good or the going is hard, we must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to all. As I said before, it would be good if the work of preaching the gospel, too, were accomplished all at once and finished, but when we actually do it, it does not happen that way. We simply strive a little more and labor a little more where we are, and so we are preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Since that is all the strength we have, God also knows our circumstances and opens the way that much at a time.

If God had blessed us greatly today and made money pour in beyond measure, our hearts might have grown so high that our life of faith collapsed altogether. So God looks at our faith and our spiritual state and leads us accordingly. Therefore, we must not try to make servants of one another, but must become people who all work together and all live together.

We too find it good to be here and would love to go somewhere comfortable and rest well, but we cannot. Let us simply live preaching this gospel with all our strength. I pray that God will grant us all good things. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

# The Law—Moses, grace and truth—Jesus Christ, the mediator—John the Baptist

**< Mark 9:1-13 >**

**"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered**

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**and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.'"**

## Moses and Elijah, who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration

Mark chapter 9 shows the scene in which Elijah and Moses appeared and talked together with Jesus. This event is recorded in three of the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In Mark chapter 8, the Lord said that He had come to this earth, would accomplish all His ministry, and would rise again three days after dying; and when Peter said this could never be, the Lord rebuked him. Then He closed chapter 8 by saying, *"Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38)*.

Coming to chapter 9, Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. Before them His form was transfigured, His clothes shining, becoming so exceedingly white that no launderer in the world could whiten them like that. He was changed suddenly, in a moment. That is why people call this mountain the Mount of Transfiguration. Through this event the Lord showed us that when He comes, if we go forth before Him, we will be changed in a moment like this.

In particular, verse 4 says, *"And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus" (Mark 9:4)*. When Elijah appeared with Moses and talked with the Lord,

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Peter, amazed at the sight, said that it was good to be there and that he wished to build three tabernacles and live there: one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But when Jesus was suddenly transfigured, the disciples were so greatly afraid that they did not know what to say and trembled. Then a cloud came from heaven and overshadowed them, and there came a voice telling them to hear Him; and when they looked around, they saw no one but Jesus only.

As the disciples came down from the mountain, the Lord warned them to tell no one what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. The disciples kept it in their hearts and discussed with one another what rising from the dead might be. Then, concerning the appearance of Elijah, they asked the Lord—for they knew Moses well but were curious about Elijah. The people of Israel counted Moses the greatest, and yet they had seen Elijah appear together with Moses and converse with Jesus.

## The Elijah who was to come is John the Baptist

From verse 11 on, the disciples asked why the scribes said that Elijah must come first. It was because the scribes, who held the office of copying and teaching the Scriptures, said that Elijah must come before the Savior. To this the Lord said, *"Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him'" (Mark 9:12–13)*. Elijah had already come, but people had failed to recognize him, made light of him, and treated him as they pleased.

What this whole passage tells us is that the mediator who connects the Old Testament and the New Testament is Elijah. The representative of the Old Testament is Moses. The Law came to us through Moses, and the grace of God came through Jesus Christ. The age of Moses passed and the age of Jesus Christ came, and the one who connects those two ages is John the Baptist—that is, Elijah.

Matthew 11:14 says, *"If you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come."* Who is the Elijah who was to come? Since verse 12 of chapter 11 says, *"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)*, Jesus was saying that the Elijah who was to come is John the Baptist.

Elijah is the servant of God who brought the people of Israel, fallen into idols and iniquity, back to God, led them to believe in God rightly, and brought them to salvation. No one in the Old Testament worked as Elijah did. Moses received the Law of God and passed it on, but the people of Israel all went against it. Elijah, however, received the command of God and, before the people of Israel who were serving Baal and Asherah, showed the power of God and that He is the living God, and turned all their hearts back to the LORD God.

So God said in the Book of Malachi that He would send His servant Elijah before the coming of the last day of wrath. This means that He would send a servant to lead the many people living stained with sin to God—that is, to Jesus Christ. It was written that Elijah would come first before the Lord, and according to that word he had already come, but people treated him however they pleased, just as it is written.

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## The mediator's ministry that John the Baptist fulfilled

Before Jesus Christ was born on this earth, God in His special providence caused John the Baptist to be conceived and born through the body of Elizabeth, six months before Jesus. When John the Baptist was thirty years old and Jesus Christ came to the Jordan River, he baptized Jesus. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus Christ fulfilled all the righteousness of God; He carried the sin of the world, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so saved us.

Therefore, the mediator between the New Testament and the Old Testament is John the Baptist of the New Testament age. The Law says that sin is death, and it brings about wrath. Moses cried out the Law, but the result was that all people fell into sin and came to death. For there is not one person who can keep the Law perfectly.

Between that Law and Jesus Christ—Jesus is the Savior, who came to save us from sin. He came to save mankind from all the curse and from the death caused by sin, and there had to be someone to do the work in between. Just as a real estate agent connects the person who puts up a house with the person who will take it, John the Baptist passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ through baptism and testified to it. He testified that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, that He is the Son of God, Jesus Christ who came to save mankind from sin—the Savior.

## Without the testimony of John the Baptist, no one can believe

John chapter 1 says that without the testimony of John the Baptist, no one could believe in Jesus. You already know this well, but there is a reason I am saying it again. It is because, not knowing this truth, many pastors and church members around the world—and even you who have received the remission of sin—will stumble if you do not remember this. However much one has heard the gospel of the water and the Spirit, if Satan the Devil trips him up and makes him assert his own rightness and turn into an adversary, even the remission of sin he received comes to an end right there.

When Jesus was changed white as snow on the Mount of Transfiguration, the ones who appeared were Elijah and Moses, and they talked with Jesus. What does this tell us? There are several things, but one of them is that Elijah played the role of mediator between Moses and Jesus Christ. It tells us that he passed all the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ; that Jesus accepted all those sins through His baptism, died, and rose from the dead to save us; and that He has finally made us people who lack nothing at all for entering and living in the kingdom of God.

Even if you know this well, it is very hard to pass it on to others. Many pastors, even with the passage of Jesus' baptism open before them on the air, turn aside when they reach this part and cannot speak of it. What does Matthew 11:14 say? It says, *"If you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come"*—so John the Baptist is Elijah. Though John the Baptist, the spiritual Elijah, testifies that Jesus is our Savior and that He bore all the sin of this world by receiving baptism from John, they read it with open eyes and still cannot testify to it.

If one testifies to this, he is at once branded a heretic and

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driven out. Because this is a spiritual battle, the world does not leave alone the one who says these things. Therefore, for you to go out to preach and speak of these things is by no means easy; without firm faith it cannot be done. But this is a plain fact. If a person does not acknowledge what John the Baptist did in baptizing Jesus Christ, and does not acknowledge that Jesus carried away the sin of the world, then however much he believes in Jesus as his Savior, will the sin in his heart disappear? That is nothing more than a religion.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, it is because of these things—that John the Baptist played the role of mediator, that Jesus bore our sins by receiving baptism, and that He died on the Cross and rose again and saved us—that we lead our life of faith and stand firm in faith. It is because of this truth that we stand firm even in our lack. Without it, it is absolutely impossible.

## The grace that restores all things

The passage uses the word restore, saying that Elijah indeed comes first and restores all things. Mankind was created in the image of God, but through Satan the Devil and through weakness fell into sin, lost the image of God, became sinners, and became slaves of the Devil. Through whom is this changed back into the image of God? It is, of course, through God.

God gave the Law through Moses to teach us our sins; John the Baptist passed the sins of mankind on to Jesus Christ once and for all through baptism; and Jesus accepted all those sins, was hung on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and saved us. In this way, the word tells us, He transforms us wholly, saves us wholly, and makes us children of God.

People do not know that John the Baptist is the mediator between us and Jesus Christ, and that the mediator between God the Father and man is Jesus Christ. If a person who believes in Jesus does not know what John the Baptist did to Jesus and merely says he knows Jesus and believes in Him, that is superstition. The representative of the Law is Moses, but the one who connects Jesus and Moses—that is, the Old Testament and the New Testament—is Elijah.

God established Elijah as the representative of mankind; so Matthew chapter 11 says, *"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" (Matthew 11:10–11).* That among those born of women there is none greater than John the Baptist means that John the Baptist is the representative of mankind. Among those born of women, where is there anyone not born of a mother? Therefore, John the Baptist, as the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus and passed all the sins of mankind on to Him.

Jesus is the One who came to accept the sins of mankind, and John the Baptist is the one who passes the sins of mankind on through baptism. This is right even in principle. When John the Baptist baptized Jesus, Jesus said that it was fitting for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness, and having been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water. That Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist means that John the Baptist passed the sin of the world on to Jesus, and that Jesus accepted all that sin of the world. And so, as the Lamb of God carrying the sin of the world, He died on the Cross and rose from the dead and became our Savior.

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## The Law through Moses; grace and truth through Jesus Christ

The representative of the Law is Moses. John 1:17 says, *"The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17)*. God gave the Law through Moses, and grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Grace here refers to the gift of salvation—to Jesus, who bore our sins, received their judgment, and rose from the dead to save us. Jesus Christ is the unchanging truth; He is the Creator of the universe and the Savior who came to save us from sin.

Therefore, we must know this mediator well. Who is the mediator for you? Those who received the remission of sin before you and me are mediators. God is there and you are here, and in between, those who first received the remission of sin connect the two. Without this mediating role, could you know by yourselves who Jesus is and how He accepted our sins through John the Baptist? Most people do not even wrestle with it; they simply say they believe in Jesus unconditionally.

Because there is a mediator to pass it on, you also come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and realize that Jesus accepted and carried the sin of the world through John the Baptist, was nailed to the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and became our Savior. The wages of sin is death, and because of sin we too deserve to die; but Jesus carried the sin of the world in our place, died on the Cross, and rose again, and became our Savior. We come to know that we obtain true salvation by believing in Jesus as our Savior. To believe without knowing is superstition, for praying to an unknown god is precisely superstition.

Therefore, the one who mediates between Jesus and us is John the Baptist, and the One who connects Jesus, who is God,

with us human beings is God Himself. You must know without fail that the mediator between the Old Testament and the New Testament is John the Baptist. The Old Testament Scriptures end with Malachi and the New Testament continues into the world of Jesus Christ, and the one who joins these two is John the Baptist. He passed all the curse of the Law of the Old Testament and its sins on to Jesus Christ our Savior through baptism.

John the Baptist was born on this earth, cried out to the people of Israel to return to God, gave baptism and passed all the sins of mankind on, and testified, *"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*. He testified concerning sin and testified concerning Jesus Christ, and then was martyred and departed from this earth. That is what he came to do. The role of John the Baptist was to pass sins on to Jesus and to testify that Jesus is the Savior, who took those sins upon Himself through baptism, was hung on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us.

## We too will be changed in a moment

The representative of the Old Testament is Moses. Moses brought the people as far as the Jordan River, within sight of the land of Canaan, showed it to them, then entrusted his charge, went up, and died. The Law is like this too: it teaches us our sins and tells us that we must go to Jesus Christ, and it works only that far. The Law cannot give us the remission of sin. Just as Moses only looked upon the land of Canaan and died, the Law also only teaches us our sins and works only that far.

We must know before God that we are sinners, and go to Jesus Christ and know the fact of how Jesus bore our sins. Knowing that John the Baptist passed our sins on, that Jesus

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accepted those sins, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved us, we believe in that Jesus. And so by faith we receive the remission of sin and become children of God, and just as Jesus was changed in a moment on the Mount of Transfiguration, we too will be changed in a moment. It is written that when the Lord comes to this earth, this corruptible body will put on the incorruptible—that is the very body He was speaking of.

Jesus accepted all the sins of you and me once and for all by receiving baptism. Your sins and mine passed on to Jesus, and Jesus carried those sins, was hung on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead, and saved us. Jesus Christ is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. By believing in that Jesus Christ as our Savior we receive the remission of sin, and even in our lack we can stand firm in faith before God and live.

If it were not so, how could we receive the remission of the sins we commit while living on this earth, red like crimson as they are? How could we become children of God and people without sin? It is impossible. Therefore, we must know this fact well, believe it, turn it over in our hearts, and listen to the word of God. It is not by any strength of ours that we serve God; God saved us and gave us wisdom, understanding, and ability, and so enabled us to do it.

We must humbly believe that we serve with the strength the Lord has given. Rather than the flesh rushing ahead to work, the heart must first stand in faith before God and work in faith. As John the Baptist said that the Lord must increase and he must decrease, we must have the attitude of heart that says: I am nothing; I only do the work the Lord has entrusted to me, and then I go. By all means, let us clearly preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit—that John the Baptist became the mediator—whether the other person understands it or not. Let us even look up Bible verses, write them down, and read them to

people, preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit in faith, and let us do so until the end of the world. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

# The Christian's attitude toward others

**< Mark 9:38-42 >**

**"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. 'But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."**

Today I would like us to think together about a few things within the words of Mark 9:38–42. First, let us look at verses 38 and 39: *"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me'" (Mark 9:38–39).*

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### *"He who is not against us is on our side"*

John and the disciples told Jesus that they had seen someone who did not follow them casting out demons in the Lord's name, and that they had forbidden him because he did not follow them. Then Jesus said not to forbid him, saying that no one who works a miracle in His name can soon afterward speak evil of Him, and in verse 40 He said that he who is not against us is on our side. This word teaches us how to conduct ourselves when people believe in Jesus as their own Savior and yet do not believe and follow the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach.

There are people who believe in Jesus but know only the Cross, and who serve God faithfully even while having sin in their hearts. Shall we regard such people as our enemies, or as lost souls? The Lord tells us to accept them if they are for God and love God and do not oppose what we do. It is not that we accept them because their faith is right; it is that we, too, must not oppose those who do not oppose the Lord, and that even if their faith is somewhat lacking, we must teach them the truth and wait for them without hostility until they receive it.

## A heart that waits for souls not yet born again

Dear fellow believers, after we have met the Lord through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, how should we treat those who are not yet born again? We are not to regard them as enemies, and yet neither have they become our brothers and sisters. Strictly speaking, we must see them as lost souls who have not yet been born again. But if such a person lives for God and does not stand against our faith, we must wait for him.

When we say that we have no sin because we believe in the

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gospel of the water and the Spirit, people who are not born again usually become very guarded. But some listen carefully to what our faith is, do not treat us as enemies, and approach us with curiosity. Therefore, we must not judge hastily or treat anyone as an enemy carelessly. If they do not oppose us, it is right to count them as being on God's side and to wait for them.

## A cup of water given to one who belongs to Christ

Let us look at verse 41: *"Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."* The Lord is saying that He will bless the person who treasures His people. Conversely, it is a word that He will punish the person who despises, slights, mistreats, and curses His people.

He said that whoever gives a cup of water will by no means lose his reward. People may not give food when asked, but water they will usually give. As one goes about, thirst is harder to bear than hunger; and even the small act of handing a cup of water to the thirsty, if it is done to one who belongs to Christ, the Lord will surely repay. For what is done to that person is done to the Lord Himself.

If we apply this word to our own lives: when we of this household work united with one another, knowing that this brother and this sister are the people of Jesus Christ and treating them so; when we overlook and make up for their mistakes and shortcomings and help them carry out their work—that also is something we do for the Lord. When we look at a brother or a sister, we must first see whether that person belongs to Christ. If he is a person who belongs to Christ, we must not treat him roughly or rudely.

So when I deal with you also, when I remember that this person is one of the Lord's people who believes in the Lord and is His worker, the attitude of my heart changes. As far as possible I embrace and do not distress the heart, and if someone goes down a wrong path, I exhort and correct him, and what must be taught I teach clearly. The way we call the men in the church brothers and the women sisters—this way of addressing one another came to us through Jesus Christ.

A person who is not saved cannot hear himself called Brother or Sister by the righteous. The words brother and sister mean that I am Christ's person and you are Christ's person; the other person believes me to be Christ's and calls me so, and therefore it is a truly precious word. Those not born again address others with their family names—Mr. Kim, Mr. Lee. If someone has a title, we call him Deacon, Senior Deaconess, or Elder, but when we address one another as fellow workers, we say Brother.

This is a way of addressing one another and a blessing that Christ has given us. The highest honorific of all is to be called Brother or Sister. A title is an office established for doing work, but brother and sister are what we call one another because we have become Christ's own—meaning, you are a person of God. Therefore, helping one another when we do God's work in union is a truly good thing. For my doing good to a brother or a sister is the same as doing good to Christ.

The people of this world slight and ignore whoever is of no benefit to them. But we treat the other person well because the name of Christ is upon him. Therefore, to know whether someone is one to be honored and treated with courtesy, we must see whether he has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ gave and become one of God's people. In the Scriptures, the Pharisees called Jesus Teacher; so we should know that calling someone Teacher is worldly, while calling

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someone Brother or Sister in the kingdom of God is the highest honorific.

And we must think of and treat God's people as we would treat Christ. Only if someone does not believe but opposes and resists may we think somewhat differently; yet toward such people we must be patient a long, long time. For some we must bear twenty years, and for some even longer.

## Do not cause even one little one to stumble

Let us look at verse 42: *"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."* The little ones means that even the least of the least, one who is insignificant in the flesh, must not be made to stumble if he is one of the Lord's people who believes in the Lord and is His worker. To stumble means to be lost. Just as we say a man has stumbled when he missteps while passing a cliff and falls to his death, so even the very least among those who believe in the Lord must not be treated carelessly and mistreated and made to stumble.

People must be careful. Those who study the human body say that everyone is born with selfish genes. To be selfish is to drive out the other person and seek to live well oneself alone; so when people gather, they often make one person among them a target and bury him completely. Even an animal, if born weak, is abandoned by its mother; yet even such an animal, if fed and cared for devotedly, grows up to some extent and becomes strong. An animal may be discarded when its inheritance is poor, but with a human being this must never be done.

Therefore, He said that if anyone causes even one of the least

of those who believe in the Lord to stumble, it would rather be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and be thrown into the sea. It is a word that if you cause another to stumble, you also will be made to stumble—and this is a word Jesus spoke directly. So even when we must rebuke someone, if we do it too harshly and the other person is knocked down and goes wrong even to the point of perishing, the responsibility for that is great. We must always bear this part in mind and remember it as we live.

## The one who believes and follows the word of the Lord is blessed

What the Lord is saying to us is this: if a person who believes in Jesus does not openly stand against us who are born again, we are not to regard him as an enemy but treat him well and give him opportunity; if someone belongs to Christ, we are to treat him as we would treat Christ; and we are not to cause even the most insignificant of those who believe in the Lord to stumble. There is much for us to learn as we live. When we come to the Lord's word, we naturally learn many things; but when we listen to human sermons or reasoning for one's own benefit, there is little to learn. The one who receives, believes, obeys, and follows according to what the Lord says becomes a blessed person.

How are we living today? The time of the Lord's coming is drawing near, and when someone beside me has been with me twenty, thirty, forty years and still does not believe, though we endure and bear with him, if bad fruit keeps coming out, we have to give warning. Is it not right to admit our wrongs to one another, turn back before the Lord, and believe in the Lord? Yet there are

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people who hold out to the end and think only they themselves are smart. We bear long with them and pray that God will give them faith; but when the word of God is written like this and they still do not believe or receive it, that is the sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

If a person does not receive it even when someone who already believes in God and has received the remission of sin exhorts and teaches him, he is one who opposes and hinders what God is doing and stands on the opposite side. We must not become such people. We must become people in whom God delights. What God delights in is believing and following the words the Lord has spoken.

Then someone may ask how we can believe and follow the Lord whom we have never seen with our eyes. The words the Lord spoke are all recorded in the Scriptures; so we treat this word as we would treat the Lord, and believe, obey, and follow just as the Scriptures say. People say they will believe if the Lord appears before their eyes, but the Lord does not do so. If the Lord were to appear to a person who has sin, that person would die. For the sinner is so dark, and the Lord is so bright a light and so holy a One.

So the Apostle John also said that when the Lord appeared to him on the island of Patmos, he became like a dead body, all the strength drained from him, trembling. The Lord reveals Himself to us through this word. Therefore, if we do not read the words of Scripture translated properly from the original text, we cannot receive salvation even though we look at the Bible; and if we do not hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit from a person who has received the remission of sin, we cannot receive the remission of sin. The gospel of the water and the Spirit is planted in the heart when we hear the word from a person in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, and so we receive the remission of

sin; it is not accomplished in the heart by knowing it as theory or understanding it religiously in the head.

When a person who has the Holy Spirit speaks, the Spirit and the word work together to give the hearer realization and believing faith, and the Holy Spirit seals his heart. This is truly important. Dear fellow believers, we are now preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit overseas. When we translate the sermons, make them into books, and send them out, people write back to tell us that they read them and truly received the remission of sin in their hearts, so that they have no sin and the Holy Spirit is in their hearts—that they have become people just like us. Because a person with the Holy Spirit in his heart preached this gospel, there is realization also in the heart of the one who reads those books, and everyone who believes receives salvation.

## The one who humbles his heart and receives the word of God

The Holy Spirit makes us understand even the deep things of God. Therefore, a person who has the Holy Spirit in his heart can know the will of God and the heart of God as he reads the Scriptures. In Proverbs there is a word meaning that the king's heart is like the water of a reservoir, flowing down to the low places. The king's heart is like the water of a great pond or reservoir: the water flows down from above into the lowest valley, flowing to the one whose heart is low, the humble one, and so it becomes a river and gathers into the sea.

When we look at the word of God, if we humble our hearts and read it carefully because it is the word of God, we come to realize what this word is saying and come to have faith.

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Therefore, we must humble our hearts before God. When we really look, there is nothing great about us. Looking back, we are full of failures and full of flaws; we may seem fine if we look only at the present, but if we look back on our lives even a little, we see what kind of people we are, and our hearts are humbled.

We may put on airs for a moment because of what the Lord has given, but we must soon turn back. Of the things I have said, apart from believing the Lord's word, most of what I said in boasting of myself was vain. A certain religious leader, when he was dying, told those who came to see him: Do not believe what I have said; everything I said was a lie. When his death drew near, he knew it. He left behind a writing saying that all his life, before countless people, he had pretended to know the truth without knowing it and pretended to be clever, telling so many lies, and that he was afraid he would fall into a bottomless hell because his sins were more than a mountain—and so he departed.

Everyone who looks back on his own past is full of shame. Yet the reason we can live rightly even in our lack is that if we look at the word of God, believe it, engrave it on our hearts, and follow it, we can live a life that is at least decent. We can also receive salvation—and we have already become such people. Now we have only to live well by faith. I will close the message here. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

# Think the thoughts that please the Lord

**< Mark 9:43-50 >**

**"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' 'For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.'"**

## Choosing one of two kinds of thoughts

Dear fellow believers, since receiving the remission of sin, how many battles between the spirit and the flesh have we fought to come this far? As we lead our life of faith before God, from the moment we open our eyes in the morning, two kinds of

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thoughts come and go. The thoughts of the flesh rise up and the thoughts of the Spirit rise up, and these two always collide. So we look at those two kinds of thoughts, decide which one to follow, lay down the thoughts of the flesh, and follow the thoughts of the Spirit. It is by choosing and following the side in which God delights that our life of faith is maintained.

Just as a tennis player, before serving, chooses the one ball he likes from those in his hand and discards the rest, so countless thoughts rise up within us, and we must discern which of them is what God delights in and set our direction. Following everything that rises up in the heart is not a life of faith. The thoughts of the Spirit and the thoughts of the flesh always rise up together, and we pick out and follow the side in which God delights. That we have come this far is also because we have followed what pleases God—He is the God of Ebenezer, who has helped us all the way here.

Of course, there are many who do not know these things. Not a few people live chasing only what unfolds before their eyes, with nothing more than the fact that they have received the remission of sin. But the reason we have kept our faith until now is that moment by moment we have chosen and followed the side in which God delights. At every moment we must discern what it is that pleases God, and choose that path and follow it.

## *"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off"*

Today, continuing from last time, I would like to share the words of Mark 9:43–50. In verse 43 the Lord said, *"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched" (Mark 9:43)*. If we took this word

only in the fleshly sense, there would be no one whose four limbs remained whole. But the Lord's meaning is: if your hand causes you to sin, do not do that evil.

What does the hand do? It plans and devises things. Choosing the bad side between the thoughts of the Spirit and the thoughts of the flesh, planning evil and doing it—if we do not cast that away, the word says, we enter the fire that is never quenched. Man is born a seed of evildoers, carrying the genes of selfishness, and so as he grows he always plans what profits himself. If he never gives up that evil plan but carries it into action, he enters the unquenchable lake of fire and suffers torment.

These days the news, too, is full of endless cases of people deceiving others and extorting their goods. Left to itself, human thinking flows toward evil at any time, even to the point of deceiving others. Dear fellow believers, the Lord is telling us that if your thoughts do not return to spiritual thoughts but chase evil thoughts and you do not stop, you will enter the unquenchable fire of hell.

## *"If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off"*

In verse 45 the Lord said, *"If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched" (Mark 9:45)*. If the hand is what plans, the foot is what goes to the place of that sin and carries it into action. Some people, even when they have thought an evil thought, are pricked in conscience and do not do it; others carry what they have thought straight into action. We must know that the person who thinks it and carries it into action is cast into hell.

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Some say there is no hell in the Bible, or that hell is not a place. But how often does the word hell appear in the Scriptures! Verses 48 and 49 say, *"Where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt" (Mark 9:48–49)*. To say there is no hell is exactly the same as saying there is no God. Just as God plainly lives and exists forever, hell also certainly exists.

It is written like this in Revelation as well: *"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 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" (Revelation 20:12–14)*. It also says, *"But the cowardly, 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" (Revelation 21:8)*—so hell is certainly a place that has locality.

Therefore, the person who does not fear hell must beware. When the two kinds of thoughts rise up, if we devise and plan evil and carry it into action, the price is to enter the fire of hell. One may say, I am saved, so I am fine; but it is rather the saved who can plan and do evil on a larger scale. This is not my word but the word of the Lord.

## *"If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out"*

In verse 47 the Lord said, *"If your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire" (Mark 9:47)*. The eye is the heart. If we set our hearts wrongly, fixing them on the side in which God does not delight and putting it into practice, we go to hell. In our hearts, two things always rise up together: the heart in which God delights and the heart in which He does not. So we must choose one of the two. We cannot help what rises up in the heart, but whether we follow it or not depends on our will.

Therefore, we must manage our hearts well. We cannot carry out two hearts at once. There are many things we fail to do properly even when we give our whole heart to one thing; how much less can we chase both hearts! We must not think that now that we have received the remission of sin, everything is the same and nothing matters. We must discern whether what rises up in the heart is right or not, and choose the side in which God delights.

For example, there was a worker who loved alcohol to excess. He drank every day and lived acting on the thoughts that followed his drinking, and in the end he stood against the gospel of the water and the Spirit and finally collapsed. I too am human, and there was a time when I was drawn to such a place and tipped glasses with him. Watching one glass become two glasses with no end, I realized that if we follow everything that rises from the heart of the flesh, we can never follow the will of God. Beyond this, man lacks so much in so many ways.

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## Even the born-again, if the salt loses its flavor

Since the word of God says so, we have nothing to say. Even a born-again person, if the salt loses its flavor, is trampled by men and thrown out with the filth and burned. People say that now that they are born again, whatever they do is fine; but what is fine about being cast into hell? Who does that work? God does. Can we refute what God does? We cannot.

Then who goes to heaven? The Lord saves us, and He sends to heaven the person who fears the Lord, receives His word and obeys it, and inclines his heart, between the two kinds of thoughts, to the side God wants and follows it. Heaven is like a fisherman catching fish in the sea. Just as the fisherman casts his net and catches fish, then gathers the good into vessels and throws the bad back into the sea, not everyone who has entered the church goes to heaven. The Scriptures do not say that whoever is born again goes to heaven unconditionally, one hundred percent.

How many brothers and sisters bear wrong fruit exactly as their hands planned! If a person keeps being stubborn and one day dies just as he is, he is judged just as he is. What is recorded in the words of Scripture will all be fulfilled to the last jot and tittle. The one who has lived according to the Lord's word goes to the good place, and the one who, though born again, has lived according to his own desires enters the fire that is never quenched. Such a person is called one who is cast away—the one who received one talent.

There are also those who put it off, saying they can do it when the time comes. A certain emperor of Rome long ago received baptism only when his death drew near, and then died. It was because he knew the efficacy of baptism. But baptism received from man is of no use though one receive it a thousand

or ten thousand times. Heaven and hell divide according to whether one believes or does not believe the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist. That emperor served the sun god even after becoming emperor and received baptism only when it came time to die; doing it that way accomplishes nothing. It was already over.

In verse 42 the Lord said, *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."* In this word whoever, you and I are all included. If we treat lightly a brother who, however lacking he may look in the flesh, clearly believes in the Lord and is born again—if we push him around and trample him and make him stumble—we will surely receive that judgment. When a millstone is hung around the neck and one is thrown into the sea, he cannot float up however much he wants to. God hates evil, and therefore He surely judges.

## The baptism Jesus received

The Apostle Paul also spoke in Romans chapter 7 of the battle between the spirit and the flesh. What God wants, I do not do; what God hates, I practice. This is man's flesh. Because this problem is not solved, theologians have made the doctrine of sanctification and say that it is solved by itself as one grows old and comes near death. But is it solved by growing old? Until the day we die, we must ceaselessly choose the thoughts of the Spirit and follow the side in which God delights.

Water is truly great in its usefulness. Without water, nothing dirty can be washed away, and this world cannot be sustained. The baptism Jesus received from John is exactly like this

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usefulness of water. Even filthy leftovers are all washed away by water, and without rain this world cannot go on living. All the sins of you and me who could only go to hell—all the sins committed in heart, in thought, and in deed, and all the sins we brought with us from birth—the Lord bore once and for all and removed with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. This is just like the usefulness of water.

Without the baptism the Lord received from John, without the shedding of blood on the Cross and the resurrection from death, you and I can never be saved. The Lord died on the Cross once and rose again once, but the efficacy of His baptism endures forever. Because the Lord accepted through baptism this sin and that sin and every minute sin, He washed away our sins and was judged in our place and saved us. That efficacy does not end with one occasion; it keeps reaching even all the sins we commit whenever we go wrong as we live in this world. That is why we have become people without sin who can lift up our faces boldly.

The Lord spoke this fearful word, too, so that we would not go to hell. The Lord regards as all the more detestable the person who, after being saved, does not live according to the will of God. Like the man who received one talent and buried it in the ground, the person who receives only salvation and does not live the rest of his life as God delights will surely be judged. The reason I say this so emphatically is that God does so, and because I want none of you to deceive yourselves and become such a person.

When we look at the words of Scripture, we must not look only at the gospel of the water and the Spirit; we must also see how we ought to live before God. The spirit and the flesh always rise up, and the two hearts collide until the day we meet the Lord. If we follow the heart of the flesh, planning evil and adding

action to it, repeating this until the day we die, we are driven out in the end—so we must turn back. The Lord speaks this word repeatedly so that we will not become so.

## *"If the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?"*

So in verse 50 the Lord closes His words, saying, *"Salt is good."* The role of salt is to keep things from rotting. Just as fish and vegetables do not rot when pickled in salt, our hearts and our faith do not rot when they are steeped in the faith that believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit—in the word of God. Though we are not perfect, if we live choosing the good side between the two hearts, we do not rot and we do not go to hell.

*"If the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?" (Mark 9:50)*—so if we have done wrong, we are to keep salt in our hearts and be at peace. The Lord has already removed even this sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit; so let us solve the problem of sin by that faith and no longer cling to such things. As He said, *"Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another,"* we must be reconciled to God by the faith that believes the baptism the Lord received for us, the judgment He received for us, and His resurrection from death, and brothers and sisters must also be at peace with one another.

Dear fellow believers, these are not my words. I myself am no exception before this word; all through my life until now, I have experienced the two hearts fighting each other. Sometimes I lost, and sometimes I won. But I know that if we follow the heart of the Spirit, we become those who are at peace with the Lord and can live well, and if we follow the heart of the flesh, we are cut off from the Lord.

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The Lord has solved all our sins with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Yet if a person knowingly keeps going toward the side in which the Lord does not delight, insisting that since the Lord saved him, He must send him to heaven, then the person who harbors such an evil heart surely goes to hell. This is a word of warning. A person may do anything while living on this earth, but he must not do everything.

Some people leap for joy when they have just received the remission of sin, but from the moment they are told to live according to the Lord's will, they begin to hate it. If someone leaves the church because it keeps him from doing what he wants, he returns to being a seed of evildoers and becomes one who instead practices evil, and he goes to hell without fail. That is betraying the Lord. If we follow the heart of the Spirit between the two hearts, we become those at peace with the Lord; but if we follow the heart of the flesh, we are cut off from the Lord.

There are people who say they believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit and yet say: I am saved now, so I want to live as I please, according to the thoughts of the flesh. When the two hearts rise up, they count the spiritual heart a narrow way and a way of suffering, and are bent on following the thoughts of the flesh; trying to go one hundred percent by the flesh, they remain in the church and yet are always in distress. But only when we who are saved give our hearts, bodies, and actions to what is right, to the work in which the Lord delights, do we avoid becoming enemies of the Lord. If we do not set our hearts on serving, we end up tormenting others according to the thoughts of the flesh and committing the sins the Lord hates.

Even after we are saved, we must keep this in mind until the day the flesh dies and we stand before the Lord. There is no one to whom the word of God does not apply. Just as there is no one not created by God, there is no one who can escape the judgment

of God. Even after being saved, to fear God and live according to His will—that is the path appointed for us.

## He gives wisdom to the obedient

Why does the Lord keep speaking such fearful words? Because He wants us not to come to hell. Just as it is wisdom for people to reconcile before they sue one another, stand trial, and go to prison, so we too must be reconciled with the Lord quickly. The day of the Lord's coming is near. Now, as a bride, we must live the life in which the Lord delights, to greet the Lord with a clean heart without spot or blemish.

Dear fellow believers, how much wisdom do you have? Wisdom and knowledge are different. However good a university one has graduated from, however many doctorates one has received, a person who does not believe the word of God has no true wisdom. In the world there are people who, though they had great wealth, took their own lives when their business collapsed and even harmed their families. Why is that? Because they have no wisdom. With wisdom, one can provide amply for life even with little; and even if the end comes to this world, one can survive to the very day when He rolls up the heavens like a scroll.

Knowing and wisdom are different. Wisdom is not given to just anyone; it is given to the person who follows and obeys God. The realization of the word also comes when wisdom comes. Ah, so this is what this word meant—that is wisdom. How do you solve the problem of your sins? To know that through the baptism the Lord received, all my sins passed on to Him at that moment, and that I therefore have no sin—that is wisdom. I want God to give you that wisdom.

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It is because you are those whom God loves that you are hearing this word. Yet even among us there can be someone like Judas. If a person says, Whatever you say, I will follow my own thinking; though the words of Scripture say so, I will live by my own stubbornness—then God says nothing, leaves him as he is, and then makes him pay the whole price at once. So we must never become such people.

For us to live as God delights is the very way to receive God's blessing. We receive the kind of blessing of the tree planted by the rivers of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season. Since we are at it, would it not be good to live a life that receives both God's love and His blessing? But to refuse the will of the church after being saved and live according to the desires of my flesh is the way of the cursed, the way of the wicked. Man has before him the way of the righteous, the way of the sinner, and the way of the wicked; the person who advances toward evil is the wicked. The wicked are like the chaff which the wind drives away; like the husks stripped off in the milling, they end up burned in the fire.

In the old days, only by hearing the word on Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday—and on Sunday both morning and afternoon—could we barely keep our hearts and live in this world. If we do not hear the word of God and do not worship often, the heart grows dirty and drifts out into the world; and between the two hearts, following the flesh is destruction. But as we worship with faith, with the word, and with the fear of God, our hearts are healed. If the salt loses its flavor, it is useless both for the kingdom of God and for the world; the Lord wants us not to become such spoiled people.

Would God have called us into the church so that we might go to hell? God knows all the weakness of our flesh, and so He has us hear the word and worship, telling us to escape from it.

The Lord loves you now and will love you forever. But if we refuse to the very end, He will judge as it is written in the word; I pray that none of you will become such a person. Giving thanks before our God for the Lord's love and exhortation, I will close the message. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

# After the cloud has lifted, hear only the words of Jesus

**< Mark 9:1-13 >**

**"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.' Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'— because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!' Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. Now as they came down from the mountain, He commanded them that they should tell no one the things they had seen, till the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept this word to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked Him, saying, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' Then He answered and told them, 'Indeed, Elijah is coming first and restores all things. And how is it written concerning the Son of Man, that**

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**He must suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.'"**

## The command from heaven, clearer than the light

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went up on a high mountain. There the form of Jesus that the disciples had always seen was changed. His clothes became whiter than any human skill could make them, and Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. The glory hidden behind the form of the Teacher whom the disciples had always seen at their side was revealed for a moment. This scene makes it impossible to think of Jesus as merely an excellent teacher or an able prophet. Jesus is the Son of God, who reveals the kingdom of God with power.

Yet we must not place the center of the event on the Mount of Transfiguration only in the brilliant light. Mark lets us hear one word clearer than the dazzling radiance: *"This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7).* What God required of the disciples was not to keep gazing at that scene or to erect a monument on the mountain. It was to hear the words of His beloved Son. The first response needed from a person who has seen the glory of the kingdom of God is neither excitement nor human planning, but believing and receiving the words of Jesus.

Peter wanted to preserve that place. He said that he would build three tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. The passage explains that he was greatly afraid and did not know what to say. So Peter's proposal cannot be regarded as a carefully weighed theological judgment. Yet in his words is revealed the confusion into which people easily fall when they face a spiritual scene. He set Jesus, Moses, and Elijah side by side, as if they were three

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figures who could each be housed in a tabernacle. God did not leave this confusion long. The voice heard out of the cloud did not say to listen to the words of Moses and Elijah as well. It said to hear the beloved Son.

## Where the testimony of Moses and Elijah pointed

Moses is the man who received the Law. The Law makes plain the holy will of God and exposes what kind of sinners we are before that will. The Law does not let us take our sins lightly, and it blocks the way of boasting that we are righteous by our own works. But the Law itself cannot wash away our sins. It is like a mirror: it can show the dirt on our face, but it cannot wash that dirt away for us. At the place Moses points to, we must acknowledge our sin and our inability, and from there we must go on to the Savior.

Elijah was the prophet who cried out so that the people who had left God would turn back. The testimony of the prophets not only rebuked man's sin but made them look toward the salvation God would send. When the disciples asked about the scribes' teaching that Elijah must come first, Jesus said that Elijah had already come and that people had treated him however they wished. Connected with the testimony of the other Gospels, this word points to John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord. John the Baptist did not make a way for himself. He was a witness who revealed Jesus, who was coming after him, and turned the hearts of the people toward Him.

The appearing of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, therefore, is not a scene of three saviors standing side by side. It is a scene in which the testimony of the Law and the Prophets converges on Jesus. Moses represents the

Law that exposes sin, and Elijah shows the prophet's mission of turning the people back to God and preparing for the One who was to come. But the One who actually bears sin, is judged, and gives us life is Jesus alone. What remained before the disciples' eyes after the cloud lifted also tells this fact: *"Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves."*

The words *"only Jesus"* do not mean that Moses and Elijah are unnecessary. They mean that their testimony reached its destination. A signpost is precious when it points rightly to the destination, but if we make the signpost the destination itself, we lose our way. The Law makes us realize our sins, and the prophets testify of the Savior who was to come. John the Baptist, too, did not tell people to believe in himself; he testified of Jesus. All true testimony does not hold people fast but sends them to Jesus. And the person who has heard the words of Jesus honors the witness but does not set him in the same place as the Savior.

## John the Baptist the witness, and Jesus the only Savior

This distinction is especially important for understanding the ministry of John the Baptist rightly. John the Baptist is the one who prepared the way of the Lord, and according to the testimony of the other Gospels, he baptized Jesus and testified that He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Through his ministry God made known why Jesus received baptism and whose sins He bore. But John the Baptist is not the savior who removed sin. The only Mediator between God and men is Jesus Christ. John the Baptist is the witness who pointed to that Mediator, and Jesus is the Son of God, who actually bore

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our sins and completed salvation.

The baptism Jesus received from John was not a rite for washing away any personal sin of Jesus. The sinless Jesus, through that baptism, bore all the sins of mankind on His own body. It was God who entrusted that task to John the Baptist, and it was Jesus who willingly received baptism and fulfilled all righteousness. John the Baptist saw that fact and testified to it. Therefore, our faith does not rest on the person or the ability of John the Baptist. Following his testimony, we go to Jesus, who bore the sin of the world.

## From glory to the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection

As they came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus suddenly spoke of death and resurrection. Having seen the scene of glory, one would have expected talk of success and exaltation; but Jesus told them not to speak of what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. The disciples asked one another what rising from the dead meant. The glory they saw and the death and resurrection they did not understand are not separate stories. The glory of Jesus is not a glory that avoids suffering, but the glory that passes through suffering and overcomes death to save sinners.

Because Jesus had borne the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John, the death of the Cross was not an accidental tragedy. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus received on the Cross, in our place, the judgment for the sins He had taken upon Himself. The sinless One did not die merely to set an example of love; He bore the punishment we deserved and shed His blood and died. And in three days He actually rose from

the dead. The resurrection is not the disciples' fond memory of a failed teacher; it is God's confirmation that Jesus overcame sin and death and accomplished salvation completely.

Whoever believes this baptism, Cross, and resurrection with his heart receives the remission of all sins once and for all. There remains no sin Jesus did not bear, and no sin that was not judged on the Cross. Whoever believes this gospel is washed of sin and becomes righteous, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. This is not a change obtained by keeping the Law perfectly. It is a change received by believing the salvation Jesus completed. In our flesh there is still weakness, and there are things we must admit and turn from; but that weakness cannot cancel the remission of sin Jesus has given.

We cannot simply decide that the white clothes of the Mount of Transfiguration are a symbol of our hearts becoming white. What the passage speaks of directly is the glory of Jesus. Yet the fact that this glorious Jesus died and rose again for sinners gives us a clear hope. The person who has received the remission of sin lives now as a child of God and waits for the resurrection of the body that the Lord will give. Our hope is not a promise that our present bodies will no longer hurt, or that our worldly circumstances will immediately shine. It is the hope that in the risen Jesus the final power of sin and death has already been broken.

## Hear the words of the Son rather than experiences

But people want to hold on to what is visible rather than to Jesus. Some hold on to the Law and boast of their own works. Some hold on to a great servant or a special experience and exalt that person's authority above the words of Jesus. Some strive to

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keep reproducing the emotion they felt on the mountain. Just as Peter tried to seize the moment by building tabernacles, we too can try to preserve a scene God has let pass. But God did not command us to repeat experiences. He told us to hear the words of His beloved Son.

To hear the words of Jesus is more than hearing sounds with the ear. It is to accept just as they are the words Jesus spoke about Himself. Jesus said that He is the glorious Son of God and, at the same time, the Son of Man who would suffer many things and be treated with contempt. He said that He would die and rise again. Therefore, a faith that believes the glory of Jesus while blurring the saving work He accomplished through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection is not sound. Conversely, we must not speak only of the suffering of the Cross and forget the power of the risen Son of God. When we hear the words of the Son, glory and suffering, death and resurrection each find their place within one salvation.

Concerning John the Baptist also, we must think according to the words of the Son. If we make little of John the Baptist, we ignore the testimony God established. But if we raise John the Baptist to the same place of salvation as Jesus, we go against the purpose of the testimony. He was not the Light but came to bear witness of the Light; he revealed Jesus, who came after him and yet was before him. Through his hands Jesus received baptism, but the One who bore sin and completed salvation is Jesus alone. The witness points out the way; the Savior is that way itself.

Even after seeing the glory on the mountain, the disciples did not immediately understand everything. They asked one another what the resurrection meant, and they questioned about Elijah too. This gives us both comfort and warning. Seeing an amazing scene once does not mean realizing all the truth. When there is a word we do not understand, we must ask Jesus rather than fill

the gap with our own guesses. At the same time, we must accept Jesus' answer even when it differs from our expectation. The way of glory the disciples wanted included the suffering and the contempt of the Son of Man.

There is also an important order in Jesus' telling them not to speak of what they had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration until He had risen. If the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration is preached apart from the Cross and the resurrection, people can misunderstand Jesus as One who only shows amazing sights. Conversely, if we speak only of suffering without the glory of the Mount of Transfiguration, we can miss who it is that hung on the Cross. The One who suffers is the beloved Son of God, and the glorious Son willingly walks the path of suffering to save sinners. Only after the resurrection could the disciples testify of the glory they saw on the mountain and the salvation accomplished through the baptism and the Cross below the mountain as one gospel.

## The fruit of faith borne at the foot of the mountain

The way down the mountain shows that faith is not a way of escaping reality. Jesus did not let the disciples stay inside the scene of glory. He went down with them to the place where there were people who did not yet believe and people who were suffering. We also must not store up the joy of having received the remission of sin only within ourselves. We must preach the gospel clearly to those who do not know it, hold up the discouraged, and live faithfully in the place entrusted to us. But none of these acts are merits for winning a place on the mountain. They are the fruit that a person already saved by the grace of Jesus bears at the foot of the mountain, following the words of

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the Son.

Hearing the words of the Son also involves discernment. However authoritative a person's words may sound, if they erase Jesus' bearing of sin or cut His salvation into pieces, we cannot receive them as they are. Conversely, we must not reject the gospel the Scriptures make plain merely because its expression is unfamiliar. We must look not only at who said something but at how those words testify of Jesus. We must see whether the flow stands whole: the Law exposes sin, John the Baptist testifies of Jesus, and Jesus completed salvation.

The heart that hears the word also humbles itself. Rather than speaking hastily in fear like Peter, we must first receive what God is saying. The more accustomed we become to the faith, the easier it is to suppose we already know everything. Yet even the disciples did not know what the resurrection meant and asked one another. To admit what we do not know and remain before the Scriptures is not evidence of weak faith; it is the attitude that exalts the words of the Son above our own thoughts. The one who reads the word carefully, connects what he understands with the whole gospel, and corrects his own thinking before the truth he has realized—he is the one who truly hears.

Such a person is thankful to the witness and yet does not subject his faith to him. Preachers and evangelists are servants who deliver the words of the Son, not masters who make the hearers their own people. The one who preaches must not go ahead of the Jesus he points to, and the one who hears must not believe or abandon the gospel because of a person's reputation. When Jesus stands at the center of the word, the witness is rightly humbled, and the saints stand on a faith that is not shaken even when people change.

Today we also go back and forth between the mountaintop and the foot of the mountain in our life of faith. There are times

when our hearts burn and the word shines clearly, and times when there is no stirring at all and only ordinary days follow one another. But the strength that keeps faith never lies in reproducing special experiences. It lies in Jesus, who remains when the cloud has lifted and Moses and Elijah are no longer seen, and in the words He has spoken. Experiences pass, but the salvation Jesus accomplished does not change. Though our emotions waver, the grace of the Lord who removed all our sins does not waver.

The person who has seen his sins before the Law must not collapse in despair but go to Jesus. The person who has heard the prophet's rebuke must not make excuses to keep his own righteousness but return to Jesus. The person who has heard the testimony of the gospel must not remain bound to the human side of the witness but believe in the Jesus he points to. These three responses are not different in essence. They are all the way of hearing the words of the beloved Son. The light God has given us is not a light that makes us boast of any man, but a light that makes us see Jesus alone clearly.

For those who have received the remission of sin as well, the command *"Hear Him!" (Mark 9:7)* remains vital. It does not mean that after being saved we may leave the word and live by our own strength. We must keep turning over in our hearts the salvation Jesus accomplished once and for all, and set our thoughts and attitudes right by that word. Obedience and service are not a price paid to maintain the remission of sin. They are the fruit of faith that one who has already become a child of God bears, delighting in the Father's will. Rather than boasting of our own strength, we must seek the wisdom and strength the Lord gives and faithfully carry out the work entrusted to us.

We must also learn the attitude of the witness. John the Baptist did not bind people to himself; he pointed to Jesus. When

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we preach the gospel, we too must not let our hearts be taken up with showing how much we know. We must help the other person know and believe the gospel Jesus completed. The one who preaches is only a channel; the One who remits sin and gives life is Jesus. Our words and our lives must direct people's eyes not to ourselves but to Jesus alone.

The conclusion of the Mount of Transfiguration was not the raising of three tabernacles. The cloud lifted, Jesus alone remained, and the disciples came down the mountain with Jesus. True faith does not try to possess the glorious moment but follows Jesus down into daily life. There it remembers the words of the Son, believes the completed gospel, and passes that gospel on to those who have not yet heard. Even when despised and misunderstood at times, it knows that the witness does not take the Savior's place, and that people's responses do not change the truth of the gospel.

## Jesus alone, who remains after the cloud has lifted

Dear fellow believers, are you not building three tabernacles in your hearts? Are you not setting Jesus and your own works side by side, Jesus and some leader side by side, the words of Jesus and your own special experiences side by side? God speaks plainly today as well. He tells us to hear His beloved Son. Follow the testimony of the Law and the Prophets and come to Jesus. Know John the Baptist rightly as the one who prepared the way of the Lord and testified of Jesus, and believe in Jesus as the only Mediator between God and men and as your Savior.

Whoever believes with his heart the salvation Jesus Himself completed receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and becomes a child of God. Do not try any longer to gain safety

by building other tabernacles. Look to Jesus, who remains after the cloud has lifted—Jesus, who overcame death and is alive even now. And hear His words and walk by faith. That word is the unchanging word of life, on the mountain and at the foot of the mountain alike. Jesus alone saves us from sin and at last establishes us in glory. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

# Christ, who is greater than our boundaries

**< Mark 9:38-42 >**

**"Now John answered Him, saying, 'Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward. 'But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea."**

## When we forbid someone because he does not follow us

John reported one thing to Jesus. A certain man was casting out demons in the name of Jesus, but he did not go about with the disciples. John did not say that the man had used the Lord's name wrongly. Nor did he say that the man had spoken evil of Jesus. The reason for stopping him was plain: they forbade him *"because he does not follow us" (Mark 9:38)*. In John's standard, the disciples' fence came before the name of Jesus. He must

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have thought he was protecting the Lord, but in reality he was protecting the boundary of his own company.

Jesus did not praise John's zeal. He corrected him: *"Do not forbid him" (Mark 9:39)*. And He said that one who works a miracle by relying on the Lord's name cannot soon speak evil of Him. *"He who is not against us is on our side" (Mark 9:40)*. This word is not a declaration that every teaching is right and no discernment is needed. The passage makes clear that the man acted in the Lord's name, did not speak evil of the Lord, and did not oppose the disciples. Jesus was not telling the disciples to abandon the truth; He was telling them not to make their own group the owner of the truth.

The disciples confused 'not following the Lord' with 'not following us.' These two are not the same. We cannot conclude that a person is opposing Jesus merely because he does not use the same expressions we use or does not work in the same way. Even within the church there can be differences of familiar custom, of generation, of ways of serving, of assigned place. If we inflate those differences into rebellion against Christ, we set our own company in the place of Jesus. The final standard for judging a person who belongs to the Lord is not our taste but the word of Jesus.

## Keep the truth, but do not raise your own fence

That said, neither may we blur the words of Jesus and say that everyone is within the same faith. To belong to Jesus does not mean merely using a Christian label or having good intentions. A person becomes Christ's own when he believes the salvation Jesus accomplished and receives the remission of sin. As John the Baptist testified, Jesus bore on His own body the

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sins mankind carried, through the baptism He received from John. Because of those sins He suffered the judgment and death of the Cross, and He rose again. Whoever believes this finished work receives the remission of sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

Therefore, in the Christian's attitude, discernment and longsuffering must go together. We cannot hastily call a person who does not believe the gospel a brother who already shares the same faith. But neither can we treat him at once as an enemy merely because he has not yet realized it. If he is not one who openly reviles the Lord or blocks the gospel, we must give him the opportunity to hear the truth and wait. This is not acknowledging his deficient understanding as right; it is refusing to shut the door toward a lost soul. We must speak the truth plainly without insulting the person, and correct what is wrong while hoping for his restoration.

Our problem is that the heart that wants to protect its own place moves faster than the heart that wants to protect the truth. When we see someone working without us, we feel uncomfortable; when a person we have not recognized bears good fruit, we can feel threatened. At that moment we first ask, Why did he not go through us? rather than, Does that man truly exalt the Lord? John's report was exactly like this. Even seeing a work done in the Lord's name, he was not glad; his heart was taken up with the fact that the man was not standing in the disciples' line. Jesus turned that gaze back to the Lord's name and the Lord's work.

Humility is needed here. Jesus is not our possession, and we cannot monopolize the work of Jesus. We are servants entrusted with the gospel, not owners of the gospel. God moves people's hearts even in places we do not know, and He uses people entrusted with roles different from ours. Of course, we must not

readily acknowledge just anything as God's work; we must discern by the Scriptures. But discernment is not a tool for dressing up jealousy as holiness. The purpose of discernment is to keep the truth of Christ and to save people, not to extend our influence.

## The Lord, who remembers even a cup of water

The words of Jesus continue at once with the story of a cup of water: "*Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward" (Mark 9:41)*. A cup of water is no grand achievement. It is a small act of service anyone can offer a thirsty person. Yet Jesus remembers that small deed. It is because the one who receives that service belongs to Christ. The Lord sees the heart toward Christ even in actions the world does not notice.

What matters is not the price of the water but the reason for the service. Jesus said that the water is given "*because you belong to Christ" (Mark 9:41)*. We do not treat a person well because his position is high, because he can profit us, or because it looks praiseworthy in others' eyes. We treasure him because he belongs to Christ. When we deal with someone in the church and look first at his office, his ability, or our acquaintance with him, the little ones are easily pushed to the back. But Jesus looks at His own name that rests on that person. Our attitude toward the Lord's people is not separated from our attitude toward the Lord.

The person who has received the remission of sin is before God not a sinner but a righteous person and a child of God. This standing does not mean that the person is perfect in the flesh.

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Even the righteous have their clumsy points, and there are times when they err in word and deed and must be exhorted. But the standing Christ gave by removing all sins does not depend on a person's talent or pace of maturing. The reason we respect our brothers and sisters is not that they are always right, but that they are children of God who have received the remission of sin by believing the completed salvation of Jesus and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

This fact does not mean that wrongs should be covered up. Precisely because we treasure Christ's people, we must give needed exhortation honestly. But the purpose of exhortation must not be to break the other person and protect my place. It must be to help him turn from the wrong path and walk again by faith. Even when the content of our words is right, if we deliver it with despising eyes and a mocking attitude, we can push a little one away. Truth is not opposed to love. True love speaks the truth, and true truth desires a person's restoration.

The word about the cup of water changes the standard of our daily lives. We easily think of great ministries and conspicuous results as spiritual work. But quietly listening to a weary brother, showing a newcomer to a seat, visiting the sick and supplying what they need, giving someone who has failed the chance to begin again—these too are service offered to Christ. What matters is not scale but the faith that recognizes and loves the one who belongs to Christ. The Lord does not forget even a cup of water handed over without human applause.

But we must not turn this word into a transaction for obtaining rewards. Salvation cannot be bought by the act of giving a cup of water and earning a reward. Salvation is the grace of God received by believing the work Jesus completed. Service is neither a condition of salvation nor a price paid to maintain it. It is the fruit of faith that a person who has already received the

remission of sin and belongs to Christ bears because of the love he has received. The word that promises a reward shows the grace of the Lord, who does not take small faithfulness lightly; it does not mean that human merit washes away sin.

If we lose this order, we fall into two errors. On one side, people think they must serve much to be saved, and so they wear people out. On the other side, people think that since they are saved by faith, it does not matter how they treat others. But the gospel refuses both ways. We receive the remission of sin not by works but by what Jesus accomplished. And the person who has received such grace, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, treasures others and bears the fruit of service. The fruit does not make the root, but from a living root fruit grows.

## A community that does not cause the little ones to stumble

After praising small service, Jesus fearfully warned against causing the little ones to stumble. The cup of water and the millstone stand within the same context. The Lord does not forget even a small good deed, but neither does He look lightly on harm done to a little one. The world fears loss if it mistreats the powerful, and thinks the powerless may be ignored. But in the community of Jesus it is the opposite. The weaker and more insignificant a person seems, the more carefully he must be protected. For that person, too, is a little one who believes in the Lord.

To cause someone to stumble does not mean every act that momentarily hurts another's feelings. The passage speaks of serious harm that makes a little one who believes in the Lord fall from the path of faith. Therefore, giving no needed rebuke at all

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is not love. Leaving wrong alone so that it goes on to deeper danger is not protection either. But when we exhort, we must think of that person's soul. We must examine our own motive: whether we mean to shame him publicly and drive him out, or to set him upright with the word and walk together.

The moment to be most careful in the church is when the difference in power is great: when a longtime believer deals with one who has just heard the gospel, when a leader deals with a learner, when an articulate person deals with one clumsy in expression, when the many deal with the one standing alone. The stronger side may not know how heavy its words sound to the other. We easily say, Can you not bear even that much? But Jesus spoke of causing one little one to stumble as something heavier than a millstone. Before the Lord's warning, we must lower our words and our attitude.

At times, group loyalty can harm the little ones. We can suspect a person because he does not stand on our side, brand him an opponent because he asks questions, and exclude him because he does not fit our accustomed ways. The attitude with which John forbade another man at the beginning and the warning about causing a little one to stumble at the end are not far apart. When we absolutize the boundary of our own company, we easily mistreat those outside it or at its edge. Jesus puts His own name before the disciples' fence, and makes us see His own person even within the little one.

## Discernment and longsuffering go together

How then should we treat those who oppose us? It does not mean smiling away every opposition. Teaching that distorts the gospel and harms souls must certainly be guarded against. But

hating a person and discerning falsehood are different things. While calling falsehood falsehood, we must desire that the person hear the truth and turn back. Especially toward a person who does not yet know the gospel accurately but does not refuse to hear, longsuffering is needed. If we hastily make him an enemy, we may be the first to block the channel through which he could hear the word.

Waiting is not diluting the truth; it is giving the truth time to reach the heart. Some realize it upon hearing once, while others, because of long-held religious ideas, must hear the explanation many times. We must not mock the other person for being slow, but pass on step by step each event and meaning of the salvation Jesus accomplished. And we must not try to produce the result by our own ability, but wait for the working of the word and the Holy Spirit. Preaching the gospel plainly and giving people opportunity go together.

Among those who belong to Christ, we must honor one another all the more. We have received the remission of sin by the same grace and received the same Holy Spirit as a gift. Offices may differ for the sake of the work entrusted, but that difference does not make anyone a less precious child of God. The one who knows much must not despise the one who knows little, and the one who has served long must not claim ownership over the one who came late. Before the Lord we are all people who live by the grace we have received. When we remember this, the names brother and sister are not empty titles but a promise to protect one another.

To respect one another does not mean to agree unconditionally. Even when opinions differ, we can speak seeing the other person as one who belongs to Christ. We can hear him out, check the facts, and open the Scriptures to examine the matter together. Winning the agreement of the majority by

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mocking a person behind his back does not make the community strong. Not losing one soul matters more than winning with a single word. Jesus counts the faith of a little one more precious than victory in an argument.

We must also remember our own weakness. If we look only at others' failures, we deceive ourselves into thinking we are always in the judge's seat. But we too have come this far by the Lord's longsuffering, and amid countless mistakes we have received the help of our brothers and sisters. There have been times when a consolation like a cup of water someone handed us raised us up again. The person who remembers the patience he has received does not easily hang words like a millstone on another. He lowers his own righteousness and tries to treat the other person with the compassion with which the Lord has treated him.

## A community with Christ at the center

Today's passage examines the community in two directions. Toward the outside, it says not to forbid a person merely because he does not follow us. Toward the inside, it says to serve those who belong to Christ even with a cup of water, and not to cause even one little one to stumble. Toward the outside, humble discernment and waiting are needed; toward the inside, respect and protection. The center that binds these two directions into one is not our organization but Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus corrects our boundaries, and the fact of belonging to Jesus guards the dignity of the little ones.

We must ask ourselves: When I try to forbid someone, is it truly for the gospel, or am I uncomfortable because he does not follow me? When I serve people, do I see one who belongs to

Christ, or do I calculate the benefit that will come back to me? When I exhort, do I want the other person's restoration, or do I want to prove that my judgment is right? When we stand before the words of Jesus, the difference of heart hidden within outwardly similar actions is exposed.

If we have judged someone carelessly and wounded him, we must not make excuses but turn back. The righteous who have received the remission of sin are not people who refuse to admit their faults. Because the righteous standing Jesus has given is certain, there is no need to lie to save face. We must admit the wrong, apologize, and responsibly help the wounded person stand again in faith. This, too, is not an act for regaining salvation, but the fitting fruit borne by one who has already received grace.

Conversely, the person who has been despised in the place of the little one and is discouraged must also hear the words of Jesus. People may count you insignificant, but Jesus remembers the cup of water handed to you. The Lord does not look lightly on whatever makes you stumble. Your worth does not depend on people's recognition but on the fact that you belong to Christ. Do not leave even Jesus because of people's wrongs, but look to the Lord, who bore all your sins, was judged, and rose again for you. Hold fast the standing of a child received in Him.

## So that the least may stand safe

Dear fellow believers, the community of Jesus does not become healthy by the voice of the greatest. It becomes healthy when the least can stand safely in faith. And that safety is not a peace made by hiding the truth; it arises when we believe the gospel plainly and treat one another as Christ's people. Let us

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not raise our fence higher than Christ. Let us discern the truth without pride, and preach the gospel to those who do not yet know it without shutting the door in hostility. Let us not withhold the service of a cup of water from our brothers and sisters, and let us not knock down the little ones with our words and our authority.

Salvation is not obtained because we have long been in some company. We receive by faith the salvation Jesus completed. We who believe this gospel are the righteous who have received the remission of all their sins, and children of God. Now let us not try to repay the grace we have received as the price of salvation, but serve one another with the fruit that flows from grace. Beginning today with the little one nearest us, let us treasure one another as Christ's people. When Christ, who is greater than our boundaries, is at the center, the church will be a community that keeps the truth and yet saves people and embraces the little ones. ✉

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# CHAPTER

# 10

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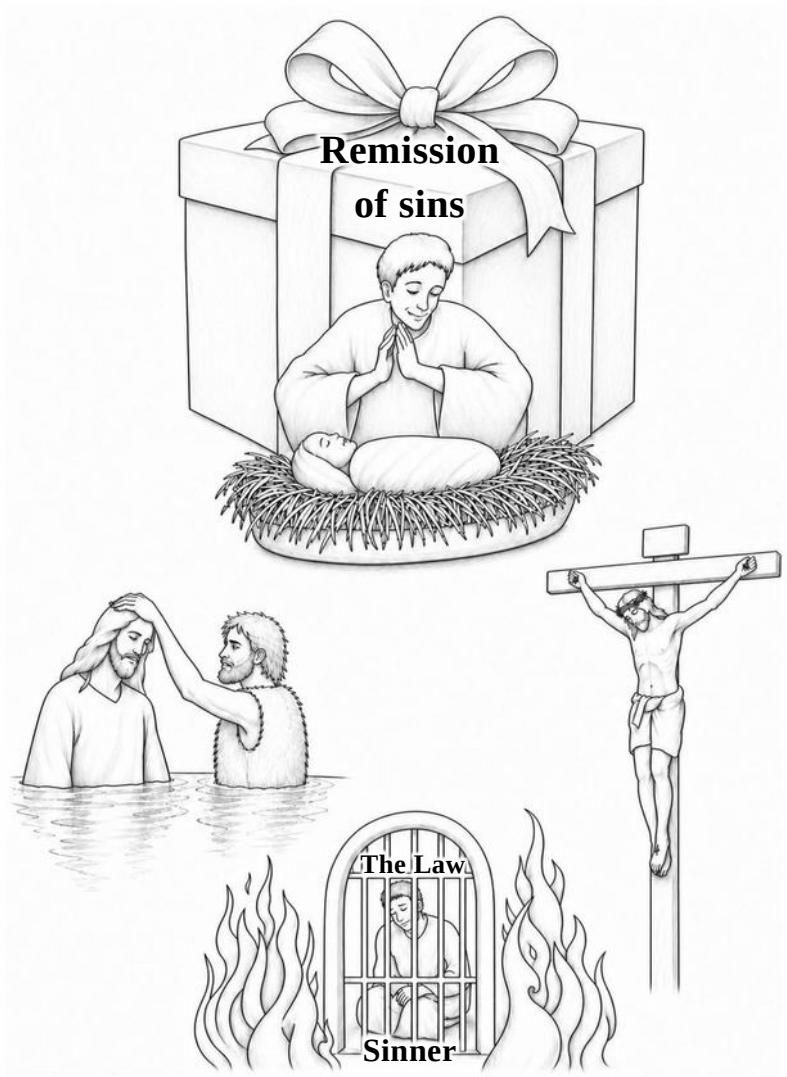


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# Mark Chapter 10

**< Mark 10:1-52 >**

**“Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. The Pharisees came and asked Him, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’ testing Him. And He answered and said to them, ‘What did Moses command you?’ They said, ‘Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.’ In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.’ Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.’ And He took them up in**

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**His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them. Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'' And he answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.' Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.' Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and**

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**children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.' Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.' Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.' And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.' And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For**

**even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.' Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.' And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' The blind man said to Him, 'Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road."**

## 1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 10 records how Jesus taught that marriage is the one-flesh relationship that God has joined together, took the little children up in His arms and blessed them, and told the man with great possessions to give up everything and follow Him. Jesus taught that it is impossible for a man to be saved by his own ability but that with God all things are possible, and He promised those who have left things for His sake and the gospel's a new community in this present age and eternal life in the age to come. On the way up to Jerusalem, He foretold for the third time that He would be delivered to the religious leaders and the Gentiles, be mocked and scourged and killed,

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and rise again after three days. But James and John demanded the high seats in Jesus' glory, and Jesus taught that whoever desires to become great must become one who serves others. Jesus Himself made it clear that He did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many. At the end, Bartimaeus, who was begging by the roadside at Jericho, called on Jesus as the Son of David and pleaded for mercy, and Jesus saw his faith and restored his sight. This chapter exposes man's hardness of heart and his desire for possessions and position, and at the same time shows that we must receive the kingdom of God like little children, depend on God for everything, and walk the way of serving.

**1. The Pharisees who tested Jesus with the question of divorce (verses 1–4)**

Jesus left Galilee and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. Many multitudes gathered to Jesus again, and He taught them as He was accustomed.

The Pharisees asked whether it was lawful for a husband to divorce his wife, in order to test Jesus. This question was not so much a sincere inquiry seeking to resolve the difficulties of married life as an attempt to entangle Jesus in a dispute.

Jesus asked them what Moses had commanded. The Pharisees answered that Moses had permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to put his wife away. They were trying to justify divorce on the basis of the permissive regulation of the Law.

However, the regulation concerning the certificate of divorce did not encourage divorce, nor did it declare divorce to be God's ideal will. It should be seen as a regulation meant to protect the weak and to restrain disorder within relationships that had already been broken.

**2. The one-flesh relationship that God has joined together (verses 5–9)**

Jesus said that Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts. It means that the reality of marriages breaking down arose because of human selfishness, desire, and irresponsibility.

Jesus did not set the standard of the dispute on the permissive regulation of the days of Moses alone, but turned it back to the beginning of creation. God made man male and female, and He made a man leave his parents and be united to his spouse so that the two become one flesh.

Marriage is not merely a contract that two people make for convenience and can easily dissolve when their minds change. It is a relationship in which two people commit themselves to each other before God and promise to live as one flesh.

Jesus said, *"What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:9)*. When conflicts arise, husband and wife must not insist only on their own rights or give up the relationship easily, but must strive to keep the relationship with forgiveness, responsibility, and love.

This word must not be used as a tool to force a victim to keep living together unconditionally in a situation of violence or abuse. The heart of the passage does not lie in condoning the perpetrator's behavior, but in commanding us not to destroy marriage carelessly out of human stubbornness and desire. In a situation where life and safety are threatened, one must first secure safety and receive appropriate help.

**3. Teaching the disciples about divorce and remarriage (verses 10–12)**

After entering the house, the disciples asked Jesus again about the matter of divorce. Jesus defined the act of

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abandoning one's spouse and marrying another as adultery. He applied the same responsibility not only to the husband but also to the wife.

In those days a man could decide on divorce more easily than a woman, but Jesus said clearly that a husband's act of abandoning his wife for his own desire is also a sin before God.

Jesus' words mean that the act of abandoning one's spouse does not become righteous merely because a legal procedure has been followed. God looks not only at the outward procedure of divorce but also at the heart, motive, and responsibility of the person who destroyed the relationship.

This passage emphasizes faithfulness in marriage and warns against irresponsible divorce and remarriage. However, the passage does not deal in detail with every case of divorce and every complicated situation. Therefore, rather than using this word to condemn everyone who has experienced divorce uniformly, we must carefully examine the truth and responsibility of each situation.

**4. Taking the little children in His arms and blessing them (verses 13–16)**

People brought little children, wanting Jesus to touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. The disciples may have thought that the little children were interrupting Jesus' important ministry.

When Jesus saw this, He was greatly displeased and told them not to forbid the little children to come to Him. He said that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, and that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.

To receive the kingdom of God as a little child does not mean that little children have no sin or fault at all. Just as a

little child does not boast of his position or merit but receives what he needs, so also a person must lay down his own ability and righteousness and receive the kingdom that God gives as a gift.

The kingdom of God is not a reward that man earns by good deeds and religious achievements. Those who acknowledge their own lack and depend on God receive it by grace.

Jesus did not merely permit the little children; He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them. The community must not regard little children as a hindrance, but must respect and protect them and help them grow in God's love and Word.

**5. The man with great possessions who asked how to obtain eternal life (verses 17–20)**

As Jesus went out on the road, one man came running, knelt before Him, and asked, *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* He was interested in eternal life, but he thought he could obtain eternal life by doing something.

Jesus said that no one is good but One, that is, God. This does not mean that Jesus Himself is not good; it is a word that makes the man reflect on the fact that he was calling Jesus merely a good human teacher. To call Jesus truly good, one must also know that He is God.

Jesus spoke of the commandments that forbid murder, adultery, theft, false witness, and defrauding, and that command one to honor one's parents. The man answered that he had kept all these commandments from his youth.

His answer shows that he was judging himself only by outwardly visible deeds. He thought that he had not murdered or stolen, but he had failed to examine before the Word of God

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even the greed in his heart and his attachment to possessions.

Jesus used the Law to expose his lack. The Law is not a tool that makes a person boast of his own righteousness, but a mirror that makes him discover the sins and idols hidden in his heart.

**6. The man who could not give up his possessions and went away sorrowful (verses 21–22)**

Jesus looked at the man and loved him. And He said that he lacked one thing: he should go and sell what he had and give to the poor, and follow Him.

Jesus did not hate the man merely because he had many possessions. Rather, because He loved him, He exposed the fact that possessions occupied a higher place than God in his heart.

Because the man had great possessions, he was sad at Jesus' words and went away sorrowful. He wanted eternal life, but he was holding on to his possessions more than to eternal life.

This word must not be interpreted only as a universal command that everyone must dispose of all his property in order to be saved. Jesus pinpointed precisely the idol that was ruling this man's heart.

What each person depends on more than God may differ. If possessions, honor, knowledge, family, or one's own righteousness stands higher than God, it can become an idol that blocks faith. Whoever would follow Jesus must examine what he loves and depends on more than God.

**7. The parable of the camel and the eye of a needle, and the salvation that is impossible for man (verses 23–27)**

Jesus told His disciples that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. When the disciples

were astonished, He said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Riches themselves are not always evil. The problem is the heart that makes riches the ground of one's life and security and thinks it can live well enough without God. Not only those who have many possessions but also those who depend on their own deeds, knowledge, and abilities are rich in heart.

The disciples asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* Jesus said that with men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.

Man cannot completely remove his sins or obtain eternal life by his own deeds. Salvation is not something man achieves by offering something to God, but something God has accomplished for sinners and gives by grace.

This word does not mean that man has no responsibility. Man must acknowledge that he cannot be saved by his own ability, and believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection. Laying down one's own merit and depending on God is the starting point of faith.

### 8. The promise given to those who have left everything for Jesus and the gospel (verses 28–31)

Peter said that he and the other disciples had left everything and followed Jesus. Jesus said that whoever has left house, family, or lands for His sake and the gospel's will receive a hundredfold in this present time, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come.

There may be people who become estranged from their families or lose their property and their means of living because they follow Jesus. Jesus does not forget such sacrifices.

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The word about receiving a hundredfold in this present time must not be used as a principle of material investment, as if offering one's property guaranteed a hundredfold return in money or land. Jesus spoke of it as including the new family and community, the care and the provision that one comes to receive within the gospel.

Jesus said clearly that along with the reward they would also receive persecutions. Following Jesus does not always bring a comfortable and successful life. Even when we suffer opposition and loss because of the gospel, we must hold on to eternal life and the hope of the kingdom of God.

The word that many who are first will be last and the last first means that one's present position and career do not determine the order in the kingdom of God. We must not become arrogant because we were called first, but must follow Jesus with humility and faith to the end.

**9. Jesus, who walked ahead on the way up to Jerusalem (verses 32–34)**

Jesus and His disciples were on the road going up to Jerusalem. Jesus walked ahead of them; the disciples were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. Jesus knew the suffering that was coming upon Him, and yet He headed for Jerusalem to fulfill the will of God.

Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and told them specifically what was going to happen. He said that He would be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and that after being condemned to death He would be delivered to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles would mock Jesus, spit on Him, scourge Him, and kill Him, but Jesus said that He would rise again after three days. This foretelling shows that Jesus' death was not an

unexpected failure but a way He knew and obeyed of His own accord.

Jesus did not speak only of suffering and death; He also spoke clearly of the resurrection. The Cross is not the final conclusion, and Jesus would overcome the power of death and rise again.

**10. James and John, who demanded the seats of glory (verses 35–40)**

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, asked Jesus to do for them whatever they asked. When Jesus asked what they wanted, they asked Him to grant that one of them might sit on His right hand and the other on His left in His glory.

Jesus had just spoken of His suffering and death, but the two disciples were thinking of high position and glory. They wanted to occupy the highest seats when Jesus became King.

Jesus asked them whether they could drink the cup that He drinks and be baptized with the baptism that He is baptized with. Here the "*cup*" and the "*baptism*" are figurative expressions for the suffering and death that Jesus would undergo. This must be distinguished from the baptism He received from John the Baptist at the Jordan River.

James and John answered that they were able, but they did not fully understand the weight of what they were saying. Jesus said that they too would suffer in the future, but that to appoint the seats on His right and His left belongs to God.

The offices and rewards of the kingdom of God are not things man obtains by ambition and competition. Before demanding a high seat, a disciple must examine whether he is faithfully following the way of Jesus.

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**11. Whoever would be great must become one who serves (verses 41–44)**

When the other ten disciples heard the request of James and John, they were angry. Since they also wanted the high seats, they may have been displeased that the two had asked first.

Jesus said that the rulers of the world lord it over people and exercise authority over them, but that it must not be so among the disciples. The leadership of the kingdom of God is different from the way of oppressing others with power.

Whoever among the disciples desires to become great must become one who serves others, and whoever desires to be first must become a slave of all.

Serving is not simply putting on a lowly posture or acting to win people's praise. It is looking after the other person's needs and actually helping that person with one's own time and ability.

An office of faith is not a seat given so that one may be waited on and give orders to people. It is a place where one bears more responsibility, cares for the weak, and gives oneself for the good of the community.

**12. He came to give His life as a ransom for many (verse 45)**

Jesus revealed in one sentence the purpose for which the Son of Man came. The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.

A ransom means the price paid in another's place to set a captive or a slave free or to release someone from a debt. Sinners are under the power of sin and death, but they cannot pay that price and become free by their own strength.

Jesus gave His own life in the place of sinners. His death was not merely an event that showed an example of a sacrificial life, but a death of ransom in which He actually paid

the price to set sinners free.

Jesus did not teach serving with words only. He who is the Son of God came down to the lowest place and gave even His own life for sinners, showing what true serving is.

A disciple's serving is not a saving act that removes other people's sins in their place, as Jesus did. Jesus alone is the Savior. A disciple serves others out of gratitude for the grace of Jesus, who gave His life to save him.

**13. *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* (verses 46–48).**

When Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. He could not see, but he heard the news that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

Bartimaeus cried out, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" "Son of David"* is a title that refers to the King and Savior whom God promised. He called Jesus not a mere man of Nazareth but the promised Savior.

Many people rebuked Bartimaeus and told him to be quiet, but he called out to Jesus all the more loudly. He thought that receiving Jesus' mercy was more important than how people evaluated him.

Bartimaeus did not hide his condition or claim that he could solve it himself. He acknowledged that he was a person in need of help, and believing that Jesus alone could help him, he pleaded for mercy.

**14. Bartimaeus, who threw aside his garment and came to Jesus (verses 49–52)**

Jesus heard Bartimaeus' cry and stood still. And He told the people to call him. The people told Bartimaeus to be of good cheer and rise, saying that Jesus was calling him.

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Bartimaeus threw aside his garment, rose up quickly, and came to Jesus. To a man who lived by begging, the garment may have been an important possession for avoiding the cold and keeping his belongings. He responded at once to Jesus' call.

Jesus asked him what he wanted Him to do for him. It was not because Jesus did not know his need, but so that Bartimaeus might confess his need and his faith with his own mouth.

Bartimaeus answered that he wanted to receive his sight. Jesus said that his faith had saved him, and he immediately received his sight.

This event is a miracle in which Jesus restored the sight of a man who actually had a visual disability. A physical disability must not be interpreted as the result of sin or lack of faith. Jesus did not condemn Bartimaeus; He heard his cry and healed what he needed.

After receiving his sight, Bartimaeus did not depart on his own way but followed Jesus on the road. Those who have received Jesus' grace must not be satisfied merely with the solution of their problems, but must become disciples of Jesus, who showed them grace, and follow His way.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 10**

First, marriage is a relationship in which God has joined two people together as one flesh, so it must not be destroyed carelessly out of human stubbornness and desire.

Second, Jesus did not stop the little children but took them in His arms and blessed them, and the kingdom of God belongs to those who receive it like little children without boasting of their own merit.

Third, the man with great possessions wanted eternal life, but he could not lay down his possessions and his own

righteousness, and he left Jesus sorrowing.

Fourth, not only those with many possessions but also those who depend on their own deeds, knowledge, and abilities are rich in heart, so they cannot enter the kingdom of God by their own strength.

Fifth, it is impossible for man to be saved by his own strength, but God saves sinners.

Sixth, those who have sacrificed for Jesus and the gospel gain a new community of faith and God's care, but they may also receive persecutions.

Seventh, Jesus foretold specifically that He would be mocked and scourged and killed, and that He would rise again after three days.

Eighth, James and John sought the high seats, but Jesus taught that whoever would become great must serve others and become a slave of all.

Ninth, Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve sinners and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Tenth, Bartimaeus acknowledged his miserable condition and pleaded for mercy, believing in Jesus as the Son of David, the promised Savior.

Eleventh, Bartimaeus did not give up despite the people's hindrance but called on Jesus, and Jesus responded to his faith and restored his sight.

Twelfth, after receiving grace, Bartimaeus did not return to his own life but became a disciple who followed Jesus on the road.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 10 is a chapter that teaches faithfulness in marriage and the humility that receives the kingdom of God like a little child, declares that salvation is impossible for the man who depends on possessions and his own righteousness, and shows that we must

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follow Jesus—who was baptized by John to bear the sin of the world and went on to the Cross to give His life as a ransom for many—not seeking high seats but serving others, and that like Bartimaeus we must acknowledge our own lack and plead for Jesus' mercy.

## 2) Mark chapter 10 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 10 shows that no one can enter the kingdom of God with man's hardness of heart and self-righteousness, and that salvation is the grace that God alone accomplishes. Through marriage, the little children, the rich man, the disciples' dispute over the seats, and the healing of Bartimaeus, Jesus taught what a person must depend on and with what heart he must receive the kingdom of God.

At the center of this chapter stands the word of Jesus that He came *"to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45)*. Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross to pay the price of those sins, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. Therefore, salvation is not a reward that man earns by keeping the commandments well or by giving up his possessions and doing good deeds; it is the gift of God, received by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed.

### 1. The hardened heart and the relationship God has joined together (verses 1–12)

The Pharisees tested Jesus with the question of divorce. Jesus said that Moses permitted the certificate of divorce not because divorce had been God's will from the beginning, but

because of the hardness of people's hearts. From the time of creation, God made man male and female and made the two become one flesh.

Sin makes a person self-centered, so that he puts his own desire and convenience first rather than loving and taking responsibility for the other person. The fundamental problem that destroys the marriage relationship also lies not in the mere lack of an institution but in the heart hardened by sin. Man cannot remove the sin in his heart or sustain perfect love by his own strength.

Whoever has received the remission of sin through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not look at marriage as a means for his own happiness alone, but must accept it as a relationship entrusted by God. The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer's heart and leads him to respect his spouse, admit his own faults, forgive, and fulfill his responsibility. The faith that one has received the remission of sin must appear not as a license to treat one's spouse carelessly, but as the responsibility to serve the other person with the grace one has received.

However, this word must not be used as a ground for making someone endure violence or abuse unconditionally. In a dangerous situation, one must first protect life and safety and receive the help that is needed.

### 2. Receiving the kingdom of God like a little child (verses 13–16)

People brought little children, wanting Jesus to touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, He was greatly displeased and told them not to stop the little children from coming to Him. He said that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, and He took the little children in His arms and blessed them.

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To receive the kingdom of God like a little child does not mean believing thoughtlessly or throwing away discernment. It means receiving salvation as a gift by depending on God's grace without putting forward one's own merit or ability, just as a little child depends on his parents' help.

Man cannot wash away his sins with his own good deeds and religious efforts. To be saved, one must first acknowledge that he is a sinner who can only perish without God's grace, and believe just as it is in the salvation that Jesus has accomplished. The kingdom of God is not a prize occupied by those who have much self-righteousness, but the kingdom that those who believe in the gospel receive by grace.

**3. The rich man who asked, *"What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* (verses 17–20).**

One man came running to Jesus, knelt down, and asked what he must do to obtain eternal life. In his question lay the thought of obtaining eternal life by his own deeds. He said confidently that he had kept many commandments from his youth.

Jesus said, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."* This word exposes the fact that the rich man, while calling Jesus a good teacher, did not know who Jesus really was. Rather than knowing Jesus fully as God and the Savior, he treated Him as a teacher who would show him the way to obtain eternal life, and he tried to obtain eternal life by his own deeds.

The Law of God was not given so that man might establish his own righteousness; it makes him realize his sin. Not having murdered or committed adultery outwardly does not mean that the heart is without sin. In man's heart are seated greed and pride, hatred and self-love. Whoever examines himself

honestly before the Law can never say that he is righteous of himself.

**4. The man rich in heart, who could not let go of his possessions and went back (verses 21–22)**

Jesus looked at the man with love and told him to sell his property, give to the poor, and follow Him. This was not a condition He set that everyone must dispose of all his property to be saved. It exposed the fact that, although the man thought he had kept the commandments well, he was actually depending on his possessions more than on God.

He not only had many possessions but also had the richness of heart that trusted in his own good deeds and moral life. He thought that he lacked almost nothing, but before Jesus' words he could not give up his possessions and went back sorrowing.

Those who are rich in heart do not earnestly seek God's grace, because they depend on their own deeds, abilities, and possessions. On the contrary, those who are poor in spirit know that they cannot escape from sin and judgment by their own goodness, and they depend on the salvation that Jesus has accomplished.

**5. The salvation that is impossible for man and possible with God (verses 23–27)**

Jesus said that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. The expression that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God emphasizes the fact that being saved by human effort is impossible.

When the disciples asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* Jesus said that with men it is impossible, but not with God, for God can do all things. This does not mean that man is saved

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automatically without doing anything; it means that the saving work of removing sin can be accomplished by God alone.

Man can neither move his sins somewhere else, nor bear the judgment of sin himself and then live again. Therefore Jesus, the Son of God, took upon Himself the sins of all people with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the punishment of those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. God Himself accomplished the salvation that man could not accomplish.

**6. Eternal life received not by works but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit**

The rich man asked, "What must I do?" but the gospel makes us believe "what Jesus has accomplished for me." The ground of salvation lies not in how well a man has kept the commandments, but in the righteousness that Jesus has fulfilled.

Jesus received all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John. And He paid the price of those sins with His blood on the Cross and rose again. The water testifies to the baptism by which the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus; the blood testifies to the judgment on those sins; and the Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and that He is God.

Whoever believes this gospel believes that his sins passed on to Jesus and that even the judgment of those sins has been finished, and so he receives the remission of sin. In the heart of the one who has received the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit dwells and testifies that he is a child of God. Eternal life is not a result that man builds up by his own effort but the gift received by believing in the salvation that God has completed.

**7. What those who have left things for the gospel receive (verses 28–31)**

Peter said that the disciples had left everything and followed Jesus. Jesus said that whoever has left house or family or lands for His sake and the gospel's will receive a hundredfold in this present age, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

To leave things here does not mean ignoring one's responsibility for one's family or giving up one's property carelessly. It means the faith that puts the Lord first when family, possessions, or social position blocks the way of following Jesus and the gospel.

The word about receiving a hundredfold is not a promise that whoever believes the gospel will surely become materially rich. It includes the meaning of meeting new brothers and sisters and a spiritual family within the gospel, and of experiencing God's care and the supply of what is needed. But persecutions also follow on that way. The life of following the gospel is not a way that guarantees only worldly success, but a way of holding on to the hope of eternal life even in afflictions.

The word that the first will be last and the last first shows that the standard of the kingdom of God is different from the ranks of the world. God looks not at property, position, and career, but at the faith that believes His grace and serves the gospel.

**8. Jesus, who goes up to Jerusalem (verses 32–34)**

Going up to Jerusalem, Jesus said again that He would be delivered to the religious leaders and the Gentiles, be mocked and scourged and killed, and rise again after three days. Jesus was not seized without knowing the suffering that would come upon Him; He went toward Jerusalem of His own accord to

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complete salvation.

The reason Jesus had to die on the Cross was that He had taken upon Himself the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who had shouldered the sins of mankind, had to be judged in their place.

But the death of Jesus did not end in failure. By rising from the dead in three days, Jesus showed that He is the Son of God and that He is God, who has overcome death. His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection are not separate events; they are one work of redemption in which He bore sins, received the judgment, and completed salvation.

### 9. The high seats that James and John sought, and the baptism of suffering (verses 35–40)

James and John asked Jesus to grant that one of them might sit on His right and the other on His left in His glory. Although Jesus was speaking of His suffering and death, they were still expecting worldly power and high seats.

The cup Jesus spoke of refers to the suffering and death He would undergo. The baptism He spoke of in this passage is likewise a figurative expression for being wholly immersed in suffering and death. Therefore, the baptism here does not refer to the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. We must distinguish between the baptism of the Jordan, by which He took upon Himself the sins of mankind, and the figurative baptism that refers to the suffering He would undergo.

James and John answered that they could also receive that cup and that baptism. In fact, the disciples later went through persecutions and afflictions as they preached the gospel. But the seats of the kingdom of God are not obtained by human ambition or competition; they are given according to the will of God.

Whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not make the gospel a means of gaining his own success and honor. The faith that believes the gospel appears not in the desire to occupy a high seat but in following the way of serving and sacrifice that Jesus walked.

**10. Whoever desires to become great must become one who serves (verses 41–44)**

When the other ten disciples heard the request of James and John, they became angry. But their anger, too, most likely arose because they also wanted the high seats. Jesus said that the rulers of the world dominate people and wield authority over them, but that it must not be so among the disciples.

In the kingdom of God, the great person is not the one who lords it over others but the one who serves others. Whoever desires to be first must become a slave of all. This does not mean abolishing leadership and authority; it means using authority not for one's own benefit but for saving and caring for others.

Whoever has received the remission of sin does not put forward his own serving as a merit for salvation. Because he has already been saved freely, he serves others out of gratitude. The Holy Spirit leads the believer not to exalt himself but to preach the gospel, care for the weak, and seek the good of the community.

**11. Jesus, who gave His life as a ransom for many (verse 45)**

Mark chapter 10 verse 45 is the word that forms the center of this chapter. Jesus did not come to be served but came to serve, and He came to give His life as a ransom for many.

A ransom means the price paid in someone's place to set free a captive or one in debt. Man was bound to sin and was in

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the state of being unable to escape death and judgment, the wages of sin. Jesus paid the price in the place of such sinners to set them free.

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 that had received those sins shed its blood and died. In the same way, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind, which passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He paid the price of all those sins completely.

For the blood of the Cross to become the price of redemption, the sins of mankind first had to pass on to Jesus. The baptism He received from John is the event in which sins passed on to Jesus; the Cross is the event in which He received the judgment of those sins; and the resurrection shows that salvation has been completed. Therefore, the water, the blood, and the Spirit are not three different gospels but testify to one complete salvation.

Here the expression *"many"* does not mean that Jesus bore the sins of only some people. The price of redemption that Jesus paid is sufficient to solve the sins of all mankind, and that salvation is actually applied to whoever believes in the gospel.

### 12. The faith that knows, like Bartimaeus, that one is a pitiful being (verses 46–48)

When Jesus was leaving Jericho, the blind beggar Bartimaeus, sitting by the road, heard that Jesus was passing by. He cried out with a loud voice, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* Many people rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he cried out all the more.

Bartimaeus knew that by his own strength he could neither

see nor change the circumstances of his life. He did not hide his lack or act as if he could solve it himself, but sought the mercy of Jesus.

For a sinner to be saved, he must first know that he is a pitiful being who cannot escape from sin and judgment by himself. Those who have much self-righteousness do not seek grace, but the one who knows his own spiritual condition seeks Jesus earnestly. True repentance does not end with regretting one's faults; it goes as far as turning from wrong faith and self-righteousness to believe in the gospel that Jesus has accomplished.

Bartimaeus' blindness itself must not be interpreted as the result of personal sin or lack of faith. The passage records the event in which a man who actually could not see was healed by the power of Jesus. At the same time, this event can also be applied to escaping from the spiritual state of not seeing one's own sins and coming to realize the truth of the gospel.

### 13. Bartimaeus, who received his sight by faith and followed Jesus (verses 49–52)

Jesus stopped and called Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus threw aside his garment, rose up quickly, and came to Jesus. When Jesus asked what he wanted Him to do for him, he answered clearly that he wanted to see.

Jesus said, *"Go your way; your faith has made you well."* And Bartimaeus immediately received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. The One who healed Bartimaeus' eyes and made him see again was not his loud voice but Jesus, whom he believed and depended on. He believed in Jesus as the Son of David, that is, the promised Christ, and sought His mercy.

We cannot immediately conclude that Bartimaeus' act of throwing away his garment is the symbol of a particular

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doctrine. However, as a spiritual application, it can be said to show the attitude of coming to Jesus without hesitating or holding on to one's own righteousness and worldly supports.

Whoever has heard the gospel must believe the fact that all his sins have been completely removed by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection. On the one who has received the remission of sin by this faith, the Holy Spirit comes, and He opens his spiritual eyes so that he believes in and follows Jesus as God and the Savior. After being healed, Bartimaeus did not go back to his place and stay there, but followed Jesus. The life of one who has received the remission of sin must also not stop at believing the gospel, but must lead on to a life of following Jesus and preaching the gospel to others.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 10 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit**

First, man's hardened heart destroys relationships, but whoever has received the remission of sin and is led by the Holy Spirit must keep the relationships God has entrusted to him with love and responsibility.

Second, the kingdom of God is obtained not by those who put forward their own merits or abilities, but by those who, like little children, depend on God's grace and receive the gospel.

Third, the rich man's problem lay not only in the fact that he had many possessions, but in the heart that depended on possessions and his own good deeds while considering himself righteous.

Fourth, the Law is not a means of saving man; it exposes man's sin and inability and makes him seek the grace of God.

Fifth, man cannot wash away his sins or obtain eternal life by his own efforts, but God has completed, through the gospel

of the water and the Spirit, the salvation that man could not accomplish.

Sixth, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and rose again, completing the way to be saved from sin and death.

Seventh, to leave something for the gospel does not mean abandoning one's responsibility for one's family, but putting Jesus and the gospel before everything.

Eighth, the hundredfold blessing of the kingdom of God does not mean only material success; it includes the spiritual family and God's care, and persecutions also come with it.

Ninth, the baptism Jesus spoke of to James and John is not the baptism of the Jordan but a figurative expression for the suffering and death He would undergo.

Tenth, the great person in the kingdom of God is not the one who dominates others by using authority, but the one who follows Jesus' example and serves others.

Eleventh, the redemption Jesus gave is the complete salvation accomplished through the baptism by which He bore the sins of mankind, the Cross on which He received the judgment of those sins, and the resurrection by which He overcame death.

Twelfth, whoever, like Bartimaeus, acknowledges his own spiritual inability and pitiful condition comes to throw away his self-righteousness and to seek the mercy and salvation of Jesus.

Thirteenth, whoever has received the remission of sin must be led by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus, and must live a life of serving others and preaching the gospel rather than occupying a high seat.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 10 is the chapter that shows that no one can enter the kingdom of God by

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possessions, works, or self-righteousness, but whoever believes like a little child in Jesus—who bore the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, gave His life on the Cross as a ransom, and rose again—receives the remission of sin and eternal life, and, like Bartimaeus, comes to open his spiritual eyes and live a life of following and serving Jesus. ✉

Mark Chapter 10

# The way of following Jesus, who came to serve

## Introduction

Mark chapter 10 is the word in which Jesus, on the way up to Jerusalem, taught the faith that enters the kingdom of God and the attitude with which those who belong to that kingdom should live. The Pharisees tested Jesus with the question of divorce, but the Lord went beyond the dispute and revealed the will of creation that God established. Marriage is not a relationship to be joined and broken according to a hardened heart, but a relationship in which God has united two people into one flesh.

The disciples stopped the little children from coming to Jesus, but the Lord blessed them and said that we must receive the kingdom of God as a little child. The kingdom of God is not a reward acquired by knowledge or merit, but the kingdom received by accepting in faith the salvation God bestows. On the other hand, the rich man depended on his possessions and on the self-righteousness of having kept the commandments, so he went away sorrowing before Jesus' words. It is impossible for a man to be saved by himself while holding on to his own goodness and property, but God Himself has accomplished the salvation that man cannot achieve.

Jesus said that He would be mocked and scourged and killed and would live again after three days, and He went to Jerusalem ahead of His disciples. But James and John sought

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the seats of glory before the Lord's suffering. Jesus taught that the great person of the kingdom of God is not the one who dominates others but the one who serves, and He revealed that He had come to give His life as a ransom for many.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body with the baptism He received from John, and carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again in three days. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin not by his own deeds or possessions but by the righteousness Christ accomplished, and receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God. The serving and sacrifice of the saved are not a price paid to obtain salvation but the fruit that flows from the grace received first.

Bartimaeus, who appears at the end of the chapter, overcame the crowd's restraint and sought mercy from Jesus, the Son of David. After coming to see, he did not go back to his own way but followed Jesus on the road. Mark chapter 10 teaches us to lay down the heart that holds on to its own rights and merits, its possessions and high seats, and to believe in and follow Jesus, who humbled Himself for sinners. A true disciple receives the grace of God like a little child, opens his spiritual eyes to look upon the Lord, and chooses the way of serving souls over the high seat.

## The purpose of marriage that God established lies not in abandoning each other but in being united as one flesh and living in love and faith

*"Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.*

*The Pharisees came and asked Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' testing Him. And He answered and said to them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. So He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'" (Mark 10:1–12).*

Jesus left Galilee and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. When the multitudes gathered again, Jesus taught them the Word of God as He was accustomed. Even on the way toward Jerusalem, He revealed to the people the will of the kingdom of God and taught His disciples to discern between the will of God and the thoughts of men.

The Pharisees came not to learn the Word but to test Jesus. They asked, *"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"* Even in those days there were various interpretations about how far divorce could be permitted. They intended to use Jesus' answer to stir up a dispute or to find a ground for condemning Him. The attitude that uses the Word of God as material for attacking others rather than applying it to one's own life is not right faith.

Jesus did not answer their claim at once but asked, *"What did Moses command you?"* The Pharisees answered that Moses

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permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to put his wife away. But they were using the regulation of Moses as if it were a permit showing that God is pleased with divorce.

The regulation concerning the certificate of divorce was not a command that one may abandon one's spouse at will. In the reality where marriages were being broken by sin and hardness of heart, it was a regulation that kept the abandoned person from being left without any protection and made responsibility clear so that divorce could not be carried out carelessly. The Pharisees turned a limited regulation, given because of man's sin, into a right that justified their own desires.

Jesus said, *"Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept."* The fundamental cause that destroys marriage lies not in the institution but in man's hardened heart. The heart that seeks only its own benefit, does not bear with the other's weakness, and abandons love and responsibility destroys the relationship. Without seeing his own hardness, a person easily insists that his breaking of the relationship is justified, putting forward only the other person's faults.

Instead of debating the range within which divorce could be permitted, Jesus returned to the will of God at the time of creation. The word *"from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female'"* shows that marriage is the order of creation that God established prior to any institution man made for convenience. God made man male and female so that they would help each other, love each other, and be united.

The word *"a man shall leave his father and mother"* does not mean despising one's parents or cutting off the relationship with them. It means that the two who marry must come out from the place of depending on their parents, form a new family, and become a relationship in which they take responsibility for each other. Neither parents nor anyone else

should rule over the couple's relationship, and the couple must not shift to others the responsibility of establishing their own family.

The word *"the two shall become one flesh"* does not mean only living together or having a physical relationship. It is a covenantal union in which two different people share their life, responsibility, and purpose and form one family. Even when their characters and habits differ, they must not insist only on their own opinions but must understand each other and together fulfill the purpose God has given.

The union of Adam and Eve that appears in Genesis chapter 2 is not merely a story about human marriage; it also carries the meaning of showing the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church born again through His salvation. Just as God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep and made a woman from his body, Jesus Christ gave His own body to save sinners. Whoever receives the remission of sin by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is united with Christ and becomes a member of the Church, His bride.

Jesus said, *"so then they are no longer two, but one flesh."* If a person thinks only of his own benefit even after marriage and uses the other according to his needs, he goes against the meaning of marriage as one flesh. Husband and wife are not a relationship in which one becomes the master of the other and oppresses, but a relationship in which they bear responsibility together before God and help each other. Forcing only one side to sacrifice while the other lives according to his own desires is not the union the Bible speaks of.

The word *"what God has joined together, let not man separate"* teaches that the owner of marriage is not man but God. A person's feelings can change and circumstances can become different, but the promise of marriage must not be

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thrown away lightly because of momentary feelings or new desires. When conflicts arise, husband and wife must not first look for the way of breaking the relationship, but must reflect on their own faults, talk with each other, and seek the way of restoration within the Word.

However, this word must not be used as a tool to force a person in violence or abuse to stay unconditionally in a dangerous place. In a situation where life and safety are threatened, one must first flee to a place of protection and seek appropriate help. The church also must not demand only one-sided endurance from the victim or cover up violence. Taking measures of separation and protection for safety must be examined as distinct from abandoning one's spouse lightly out of one's own desire.

After entering the house, Jesus explained this matter more clearly to His disciples. He said that whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against his first wife, and that a wife who abandons her husband and marries another also commits adultery. Jesus gave no privilege to the husband alone; He required faithfulness and responsibility in marriage from both husband and wife.

The center of the passage does not lie in judging every complicated case of divorce with one sentence. Jesus rebuked the hardened thought that one may abandon one's spouse according to one's own desire as long as the legal form is in place. Having prepared a certificate of divorce does not make righteous the sin of abandoning love and responsibility before God. Even when man's law permits an action, one must examine one's own heart and motive before the will of God.

This word is not meant to condemn married people only. Those who are not married are also not free from the heart of lust and selfishness, hatred and betrayal. Nor is the heart

righteous merely because one is maintaining a marriage. One can live together outwardly while despising the other and living according to one's own desires. Before the Word of God, everyone must acknowledge the hardness and sin within himself.

The Law shows how man should live, but it cannot cleanse the hardened heart itself. It is necessary to strive to keep the commandment of marriage, but that effort cannot wash away past sins or make one a perfectly righteous person. To solve not only adultery and betrayal but all the sins that come out of the heart, what is needed is not the merit man builds up but the salvation God has accomplished.

Jesus came in the flesh to save hardened and sinful mankind. With the baptism He received from John, He took upon His own body all the sins of all people in the world, including adultery and lust, hatred and selfishness. And carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving the punishment of sin in our place, and He was buried and rose again in three days.

A sinner is not saved because his married life is successful, nor is he excluded from the grace of the gospel merely because his marriage has failed. When a sinner believes in his heart the fact that all his sins were completely removed by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again. Even one who has already committed the sin of divorce or adultery receives the complete remission of sin if he does not justify his sin but believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Having received the remission of sin does not mean that one may take one's past faults lightly or ignore the wounds one

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has given to others. The saved must acknowledge their faults within the grace of God, take responsibility within the range possible, and receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as not to repeat the same sins. One must not treat one's spouse like one's own possession, but respect and love him or her as a precious person entrusted by God.

Christ loved sinners without seeking His own benefit, and gave His own body. A husband and wife cannot practice that love perfectly, but when they remember the love they received through the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they can gain the strength to bear with each other's lack, correct their faults, and live on together. The center of married life must lie not in who has more rights, but in how the two will serve the will of God together.

This passage teaches us not to treat marriage lightly as a contract that can be joined and broken according to man's desire and convenience. The marriage God established is a union in which two people become one flesh, love each other, take responsibility for each other, and serve the will of God together. At the same time, whoever discovers his own hardness and failure must not despair or try to make himself righteous by outward deeds, but must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit completed by Jesus Christ and receive the remission of sin. The one who has received the remission of sin must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, treasure his relationships, exalt the Word of God above his own desires, and show in his life the faithful love he has received from Christ.

## The kingdom of God belongs not to those who put forward their own merits but to those who receive the word of God just as it is, like little children

*"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:13–16).*

People brought little children to Jesus, wanting Him to touch them. The parents must have wished that Jesus would show the children His love and bless them. The children did not find their own way there; they came to Jesus led by the hands of their parents or guardians. This scene shows that parents and the community of faith have the responsibility of leading young souls to Jesus and letting them hear the Word of God.

The disciples rebuked those who were bringing the little children. Since Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and had to teach many people, they may have thought that caring for little children was not important. They may have judged that the children were taking up Jesus' time and hindering His ministry. But that was a thought different from the heart of Jesus.

People easily judge the worth of others by visible ability and position, knowledge and usefulness. They may treat influential people as important while pushing back little children and the weak, those who know little and need help. But Jesus did not decide the worth of a soul by a person's social position or ability. Even a little child is a precious life

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created and loved by God.

Jesus saw what the disciples were doing and was greatly displeased. He was displeased not because the children were making a commotion, but because the disciples were blocking the way of the children coming to Him. The disciples were serving Jesus at His side, yet they did not rightly understand whom He receives. We must beware that even while claiming to serve the Lord, we can block the way of others coming to Him with our own judgment.

Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them."* Those who preach the gospel, and the church, must not arbitrarily decide who is qualified to hear the gospel by looking at a person's age or background, knowledge or past. The way must be opened for anyone to come to Jesus and hear the Word of God. In particular, if we teach little children only success in the world and do not teach them the Word concerning sin and salvation, we are missing what matters most.

Bringing a little child to Jesus does not end with simply bringing him to the church building. We must teach the Word so that the child may know the God who created him, understand that he too is a sinner, and understand how Jesus Christ solved that sin. We should explain according to the child's age, but we must not leave out the core of the gospel or change it into another story.

Jesus said, *"of such is the kingdom of God."* This does not mean that little children are wholly without sin from birth or that all their behavior is good. Self-centered desires and stubbornness appear even in little children. What Jesus emphasized was not the social position or merit a little child possesses, but the child's way of depending on and receiving what is given.

A little child does not earn his own living or pay his parents

before receiving their care. He depends on his parents for what he needs and receives what is given. The kingdom of God, likewise, is not a kingdom that man buys and obtains by building up good deeds and religious merits. One must acknowledge that he cannot solve his sins by himself and accept in faith the salvation God has freely given.

This verse emphasizes the faith that receives the Word of God purely, like a little child. A little child receives the words of the person he trusts just as they are, without turning them into complicated calculations. In the same way, even when the Word of God differs from his own thoughts, a sinner must not put his own judgment first but must receive as true what God has spoken.

Faith like a little child's does not mean the foolishness or immaturity of believing anything without discernment. False teachings and human claims must be discerned by the written Word. The purity spoken of here is the attitude that does not refute God's clear Word with one's own knowledge and stubbornness, nor bend the Word in the direction convenient for oneself.

An adult may depend on his own experience and knowledge and try to judge even the Word of God. Even when he hears the gospel, he may reject it because it differs from his religious tradition, or refuse to accept it because it does not recognize his good deeds. Thinking that admitting his sin would wound his pride and topple the merits he has built up, he may push the Word away. With such a heart no one can receive the kingdom of God as a gift.

Jesus said firmly, "*whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*" The kingdom of God is not an object to be conquered by research or acquired by man's qualifications; it is the kingdom received by

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accepting what God gives. The learned and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, must all receive the same gospel by faith.

To ‘receive’ is not merely to agree with a doctrine with one’s lips, but to accept in one’s heart the salvation God has accomplished. One must acknowledge the word that he is a sinner before God and cannot escape the judgment by his own strength. At the same time, one must also believe the gospel just as it is: God has already resolved the problem of all his sins.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to this earth in the flesh to save sinners. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world, including little children and adults. Carrying those sins, He was crucified and shed His blood and died, receiving all the punishment of sin in our place, and He was buried and rose again in three days.

There is no need to add man’s merit to the salvation Jesus accomplished. Whoever believes purely, like a little child, in the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus bore all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection—receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. To whoever believes this gospel, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift, makes him His child, and lets him enter the kingdom of God.

We must not think, on the basis of this verse, that the laying of hands on little children or any religious ceremony itself washes away sin. That Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them with the laying on of His hands shows that He loved and received them. But the remission of sin does not come from the act of a person’s hands touching a head; it is received when one believes in his heart the gospel of the water

and the Spirit that Jesus Christ accomplished.

Jesus did not bless the little children from a distance with words only; He took them directly in His arms. To the disciples the children seemed a bother, but to Jesus they were precious enough to embrace. The love of Jesus does not see people as a vague crowd; it is the love that receives and cares for one soul at close hand. The church also must not neglect little children and the weak, but care for them with the Word and with love.

Parents must not let their children make entering a good school and a good workplace the only goal of life. Even if a child succeeds in the world, without receiving the remission of sin he cannot obtain eternal life. Parents must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit accurately and show it in their lives, and help their children hear the Word of God naturally and ask questions. Rather than forcing faith into them, they must teach the Word clearly and lead them to believe from the heart for themselves.

Those who preach the gospel also must not try to make the hearer submit to their own knowledge. Do not turn the gospel into a complicated philosophy or religious theory that confuses people; preach according to the written Word how Jesus saved sinners. We must lead the one who receives the Word to believe not in the evangelist but in Jesus Christ and the salvation He accomplished.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, we need the pure heart of a little child. If one thinks he knows everything because he has lived the life of faith for a long time, or takes the familiar Word lightly, it is hard for him to receive God's guidance. The saved must keep learning before the Word, admit that their own thoughts can be wrong, and turn back when the Holy Spirit awakens them through the Word.

At the same time, faith like a little child's does not mean

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that one may avoid responsibility or remain continually immature in spirit. Whoever has received the gospel purely must learn the Word and grow in faith. Being babes in what is evil and mature in discerning the will of God, we must become people who deliver the salvation we have received to others and care for weak souls.

This passage teaches that the kingdom of God is not the possession of those who boast of their knowledge and merits, but belongs to those who receive the grace of God like little children. A sinner must not put forward what he has, but believe just as it is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit completed by Jesus. And those who have been saved first must not block the way of other souls coming to Jesus, but must lead everyone with love—even little children and the weak—so that they may hear the gospel and receive the remission of sin.

## Eternal life is not a reward earned by one's own goodness and possessions, but a gift received by throwing away one's own righteousness and believing in the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ

*"Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'' And he answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.' Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him,*

*and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:17–22).*

When Jesus set out on the road, one man came running and knelt before Him. He showed an attitude of respect toward Jesus and asked a serious question about eternal life. Compared with people indifferent to eternal life, his interest and behavior looked very zealous and devout. But Jesus did not look only at the zeal that appeared outwardly; He exposed how the man understood eternal life.

The man asked, *"what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* In this question lay the thought that he could obtain eternal life by his own deeds. He did not yet know what kind of sinner he was, and that man's good deeds cannot reach the righteousness of God. He thought that if he only supplemented one or two deeds he still lacked, he could obtain eternal life.

Just before this, Jesus had said that we must receive the kingdom of God as a little child. A little child does not buy his parents' care by paying a price; he depends on and receives what is given. But this man tried to obtain the kingdom of God as the wages of what he had done, not to receive it as a gift. The attitude of the little children in the preceding passage and the attitude of this man form a sharp contrast.

He called Jesus *"Good Teacher."* Jesus answered, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."* This was not a word by which Jesus denied that He is good or that He is God. He was pointing out that the man was thinking of Him merely as an especially good human teacher among many.

Jesus is the truly good God. Therefore, for that man to call Jesus good, he had to know that He is not a mere moral teacher

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but the Savior, God come in the flesh. Acknowledging Jesus as a respectable saint or excellent teacher cannot obtain eternal life. One must know and believe who He is and what He has accomplished for sinners.

Jesus spoke to the man of the commandments concerning murder and adultery, theft and false witness, defrauding and honoring one's parents. Jesus did not teach that one can obtain eternal life as the wages of keeping the Law well. To the one who believed he could obtain eternal life by his deeds, He presented the Law so that he might look back at whether he could actually fulfill that standard.

The Law is not a ladder that makes a sinner righteous but a mirror that exposes man's sin and inability. Not having murdered cannot be judged only by the outward act of not killing someone directly. Harboring hatred and contempt in the heart is also the root of murder, and even without committing adultery in the flesh, whoever harbors lust in his heart has already revealed the disposition of that sin. The Law of God examines not only actions but also the thoughts and motives of the heart.

But the man answered confidently, *"Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."* He may have lived a relatively upright and moral life before people. But he failed to examine his heart in the light of God's perfect standard. If he had truly realized the Law, he would have acknowledged that he was a sinner and sought the mercy of God rather than saying he had kept all the commandments.

In his answer appeared the heart that trusted in his own goodness. This reveals the state of being rich in heart and full of self-righteousness. He was not merely a man with much material wealth; he was a man who had piled up in his heart, like property, his good deeds and sincerity and even his

religious career. Because he thought he already had much righteousness, he could not come down to the place of the poor sinner who must receive the grace of the Savior.

Jesus looked at such a man and loved him. The love of Jesus was not a love that acknowledged his wrong conviction as it was or spoke only pleasing words. It was the love that exposed precisely what he was bound to and why he was failing to obtain eternal life. If we truly love a person, we must rightly show him, through the Word, the state of his sin and faith, even if it makes him uncomfortable for a moment.

Jesus said, *"One thing you lack."* This does not mean that he was an almost perfect man who would obtain eternal life by adding just one last good deed. It was the word that exposed the fundamental idol ruling his heart. He claimed to have kept all the commandments, but in reality he depended on and loved his possessions more than God.

Jesus told him to sell all he had, give to the poor, and follow Him. This command is not a general condition of salvation requiring everyone to dispose of all his property. Nor can the act of distributing one's property to the poor become the price that washes away sin or buys eternal life. Jesus exposed to this man that his possessions had become an idol more precious to him than God, and told him to lay it down and follow Him, the true Savior.

What he lacked was not one outward act of disposing of his property, but the heart that believes in and follows Jesus as God and the Savior. He claimed to have kept the commandments concerning his neighbor, but he collapsed before the commandment to love God above all and to set no idol in His place. The fact that he could not give up his property showed that the master of his heart was not God but his possessions.

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The word *"and you will have treasure in heaven"* likewise does not mean that one buys the qualification for heaven in proportion to the amount of property donated. It is the word telling him not to hold on to earthly possessions as his eternal security but to make God and His kingdom his true treasure. Possessions are a tool needed for living, but they can neither give a person eternal life nor save him from death and judgment.

Hearing Jesus' words, the man became sad and went away sorrowful. He wanted eternal life, but he did not want to lay down his possessions and his own righteousness. The heart that did not want to lose what he had was greater than the heart that wanted to follow Jesus. In the end, he had run to Jesus to ask about eternal life, but he could not receive Jesus' words and left.

The fact that he grieved does not by itself mean that he repented. Being pricked in heart or becoming anxious after hearing the Word is different from receiving and believing that Word. Whoever knows his fault and yet does not give up what he treasures can turn his back on Jesus. True repentance does not stay in sorrowful feelings; it is acknowledging that one's own judgment was wrong and turning back to the Word of God.

This passage does not teach that having money is itself a sin. In the Bible there are also people who used the wealth they received from God in good ways. The problem is not that a person possesses wealth but that wealth possesses a person's heart. Money and honor, knowledge and position, family and even one's own ability can become idols if one depends on and loves them more than God.

Man cannot obtain eternal life by his own deeds. When a sinner who has failed to keep God's commandments perfectly puts forward his own good deeds, he fails to realize his sin and

comes to refuse grace. The starting point of eternal life lies in acknowledging that one is a sinner who has nothing to boast of before the Law and cannot save himself.

Jesus Christ came to save sinners like this, who cannot obtain eternal life by their own strength. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon His own body all the sins of everyone in the world, including greed and pride, self-righteousness and idolatry. And carrying those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, receiving in our place the judgment that sinners deserve, and He rose again in three days.

Whoever believes in the salvation completed by the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, not as the wages of his good deeds but by the grace of God. To whoever believes this gospel in his heart, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift and gives eternal life. Eternal life is not the answer to "What more must I do?" but the gift received by believing "what Jesus Christ has accomplished for me."

This does not mean, however, that the saved may use their possessions according to their own desires. The remission of sin is received freely, but the saved must know that everything they have has come from the Lord and use it for the will of God. We must look after the poor, serve the preaching of the gospel, and not refuse the Word of God because of possessions. This is not a price paid to buy eternal life but the fruit of faith borne by the one who has received eternal life.

The property of this rich man is not limited to material things; it includes a person's rightness and excellence, knowledge and ability. To follow the Lord, one must lay down the stubbornness of insisting on being right and the pride of being better than others. If one puts his own recognition and benefit before the work of the church and the preaching of the

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gospel, he may say with his lips that he follows the Lord while in reality ending up like this man, holding on to his property and leaving.

But denying oneself does not mean eliminating all one's talents and judgment or submitting unconditionally to the unjust demands of others. It is not exalting one's own thoughts above the Word of God, and using the talents and possessions God has given as tools for serving the gospel and one's neighbor rather than for self-boasting. Not insisting on one's own way ahead of the Lord but following the Word is the attitude of a true disciple.

This passage teaches that zeal that looks devout and a moral life cannot by themselves obtain eternal life. The rich man ran to Jesus and knelt before Him, but he could not lay down his self-righteousness and possessions, and he left Him. A sinner must not try to prove his own goodness, but must acknowledge his sin and inability before the Law. And he must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit completed by Jesus Christ, receive the remission of all his sins, and obtain eternal life. Whoever has received this grace must not serve possessions and self-righteousness as his master, but must treasure the Lord as his most precious treasure and live following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## No one can be saved by human strength, but God has completely saved sinners through the gospel of the water and the Spirit

*"Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But*

*Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.' Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'" (Mark 10:23–31).*

The man with great possessions asked Jesus about eternal life and yet went away with a sad face, unable to lay down his property. After watching the man walk away, Jesus looked around at His disciples and said that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. Through one man's failure, Jesus taught the principle of salvation that every disciple must know.

Riches themselves are not evil. A person can use wealth to provide what is needed for living, care for his family, help neighbors in difficulty, and serve the preaching of the gospel. The problem lies in man's depending on and loving riches more than God. The more wealth increases, the easier it is to fall into the thought that one can guarantee one's own future and into the feeling of being superior to others.

This richness is not limited to material things; it refers also to the richness of heart. A person can hold on, as if property,

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not only to money but to learning and honor, religious career and good deeds, his own judgment and ability. If he thinks he is better than others and lacks nothing, he feels no reason to seek God's mercy and no need to depend on the Savior. Such self-satisfaction blocks the way into the kingdom of God.

The rich man who appeared just before claimed to have kept all God's commandments from his youth. He had much materially and also much self-righteousness. He thought he had already lived an excellent life, so that by adding just one lacking good deed he could obtain eternal life. But Jesus' word revealed that he was a man who loved his possessions more than God and could not throw away that idol by his own strength.

The disciples were astonished to hear that it is hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. In those days people easily thought of great wealth as a sign of God's blessing and approval. If even the wealthy and religiously upright find it hard to enter, the question arose as to who could enter the kingdom of God. Jesus did not avoid their astonishment but spoke even more strongly of the impossibility of salvation.

Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The camel was a very large animal that people of that day could easily picture, and the eye of a needle is the small hole through which thread is passed. For a big camel to pass through a small needle's eye is impossible by human ability. There is no need to reinterpret this word as a story about a small city gate that a camel could pass through by lowering its body. Jesus' point is not that it is somewhat difficult but that it is impossible by man's strength.

This impossibility does not apply only to those who have

much money. Even with little property one can love money most, and one can even make one's poverty one's own righteousness. Everyone has the sinful disposition of depending on his own deeds and judgment. Therefore it is not that the rich alone need a special way of salvation; all people must receive the salvation of God.

The disciples asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* This question moves the center of the passage from the management of wealth to the problem of salvation. If a man cannot throw away greed and pride by his own strength and keep the Law perfectly to enter the kingdom of God, then no one can be saved by himself. Even a person of many good deeds cannot reach the perfect righteousness of God, and even a person of much religious effort cannot remove his own sins.

Jesus looked at His disciples and said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."* Salvation is not something a man achieves by persistently attempting the impossible. God Himself accomplishes the salvation that is impossible for man, and the sinner receives by faith what God has completed.

Man cannot pass his sins on to another person or offset them with good deeds, nor can he escape death and judgment, the wages of sin. Even if he distributed all his wealth to the poor, the sins he has already committed would not disappear. Even if he laid down his own life, his blood could not become the righteous price that washes away all sins. The One who saves sinners is only the sinless Son of God.

Jesus Christ came to this earth in the flesh to accomplish the salvation that is impossible for man. With the baptism He received from John, He took upon His own body all the sins of everyone in the world, including greed and pride, self-righteousness and idolatry. And carrying those sins, He shed

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His blood and died on the Cross, receiving all the punishment of sin in our place, and He was buried and rose again in three days.

The baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection are the complete salvation God accomplished for sinners. Man cannot remove his own sins, but God made Jesus Christ bear all sins and pay their price in full. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, regardless of how much or little property he has or what his deeds are, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again.

The word *"with God all things are possible"* does not mean that everyone is saved automatically even without believing. God has completed the salvation that solves all sins, but man must throw away his self-righteousness and other gospels and receive in his heart the righteousness God has accomplished. If, like the rich man, one hears Jesus' words and yet loves more what he depends on and leaves, he cannot enjoy the grace of the completed salvation.

Peter said, *"See, we have left all and followed You."* The rich man had left holding on to his possessions, but the disciples had left their livelihoods and familiar lives behind and followed Jesus. In Peter's words lay the sacrifice they had actually made, but at the same time there may also have been the heart that compared their choice with the rich man and asked what they would receive.

Jesus did not ignore the disciples' sacrifice. He promised that whoever has left house and family and lands for His sake and the gospel's has a reward in this age and in the age to come. The Lord does not forget the losses and loneliness, the persecutions and labors borne in order to believe and follow the

gospel. Even if the people of the world do not recognize it, God knows that heart and faith and repays fittingly.

But the word "left" is not a command to abandon one's responsibility for one's family unconditionally or to dispose of one's property carelessly. Neglecting one's parents, spouse, and children with the gospel as an excuse does not agree with the other words of Scripture. To leave, here, means not to put family or possessions before the Lord when they demand that one reject Jesus and the gospel, and to bear the losses and severances that come because one follows the gospel.

If someone forces people to cut off their family relationships and offer up their property in order to subordinate them to his own organization, he is misusing this word. Jesus did not make people the possession of a particular leader; He told them to follow Him for His sake and the gospel's. The act of abandoning property or becoming distant from one's family is not itself faith. What matters is not what one has left but whom one believes and for what gospel one follows.

While saying that they would receive a hundredfold in this time, Jesus added, *"with persecutions."* This promise must not be interpreted as an investment formula by which one who offers his property gets back exactly a hundredfold in money and real estate in this life. One may lose his fleshly family and house for the gospel, but within the church of God he meets numerous brothers and sisters and a spiritual family, and lives receiving care together with them. God supplies what is needed, but whoever follows the gospel also receives hatred and persecution from the world.

The way of following Christ is not a way of prosperity without any affliction on this earth. There are the comfort and supply the Lord gives, the love of the church, and spiritual blessings, but one may also suffer blame and loss from those

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who oppose the gospel. God did not promise only the blessings of this age; He also spoke clearly of persecution. Therefore we must not judge only visible material success to be the blessing of God.

The word *"in the age to come, eternal life"* also does not mean that a person buys eternal life as the price of the property and family he has left. Eternal life is the grace received by believing in the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. The life of leaving everything and following the Lord is not the price paid for eternal life, but the result of faith that appears in the one who has already believed in Jesus as his most precious Savior. God does not turn away from that faith and labor.

Finally, Jesus said, *"many who are first will be last, and the last first."* Peter had said that they had left everything, but that fact was not to become a ground for exalting themselves above others. Having become a disciple first, or having lived the life of faith for a long time, does not automatically make one a person who stands ahead in the kingdom of God.

Becoming first or last depends not on the years of one's faith or one's office, but on whether one actually believes the Word and follows the Lord. Even one who has long known the gospel can fall behind if he puts his own benefit and stubbornness first, and even one who heard the gospel late can go ahead if he believes purely and serves the Lord and the gospel. We must not boast of past devotion to justify present disobedience.

The word that the first can become last does not mean that the saved must maintain their salvation by their own merits in daily fear. The ground of salvation is the unchanging gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is rather the warning not to become arrogant or lord it over others while claiming to have received the grace of salvation, but to humble oneself before the Word

to the end and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This passage teaches that no one can enter the kingdom of God by man's wealth, good deeds, or religious career. Just as a camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle, it is impossible for a sinner to save himself by his own strength. But God has completed that impossible salvation through the gospel of the water and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Whoever has received eternal life by believing this gospel must not serve possessions and self-righteousness as his master, but must treasure the Lord and the gospel most, and follow the Lord with thanksgiving even when there are persecutions and losses.

## Although Jesus knew all the suffering, death, and resurrection He would undergo, He took the lead and went up to Jerusalem to save sinners

*"Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.'" (Mark 10:32–34).*

Jesus and His disciples were on the road going up to Jerusalem. Geographically also they were climbing toward a high place, but what matters more is that Jesus was heading toward the place where He would suffer the Cross. In Jerusalem there were the temple and the religious leaders, but

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rather than welcoming the Son of God, they would resolve to kill Him.

Jesus did not walk behind His disciples, dragged along reluctantly; He walked ahead of them. Nor did He walk boldly because He did not know what suffering awaited Him in Jerusalem. Knowing fully that arrest and insult, scourging and death were waiting, Jesus went forward at the head in obedience to the Father's will to save sinners.

This shows that Jesus was not a victim who died unexpectedly, caught up in people's schemes. The responsibility for the evil decision of the chief priests and the scribes, and for the Gentiles' killing of Jesus, lies with them. But even man's evil plans could not destroy the work of salvation God had ordained. Jesus' life was not taken from Him by force; He gave it up willingly to save sinners.

The disciples were amazed to see Jesus going ahead, and those who followed were afraid. In Jesus' bearing there must have appeared a solemnity and resolve different from usual. Those who knew the possibility of a clash with the religious leaders in Jerusalem may have been afraid, not knowing what would happen. They were walking the same road as Jesus, but they did not fully understand the meaning of that road.

A person can follow Jesus outwardly and yet not know the will of salvation He accomplishes. One can attend church and engage in religious activities without knowing why Jesus had to suffer and die. If one knows the Cross only as an ornament or a symbol of moving sacrifice, and does not know what sins He carried and was judged for, he has not fully understood the gospel.

Jesus again took the twelve disciples aside and told them what would happen to Him. He had already taught His death and resurrection in Mark chapters 8 and 9. But the disciples

failed to understand the word or found it hard to accept. Jesus did not give up because their understanding was slow; He taught repeatedly the gospel they absolutely had to know.

This foretelling is more specific than the previous ones. Jesus said that in Jerusalem He would be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and that after they condemned Him to death they would deliver Him to the Gentiles. Then He revealed one by one that the Gentiles would mock Him, spit on Him, scourge Him, and kill Him. This word shows in advance the order of the trial and the event of the Cross that would follow.

The chief priests and the scribes were people who studied the Word of God and taught it to the people. Yet they rejected the Son of God because Jesus differed from the image of the Messiah they expected. Having a religious office and knowledge of the Scriptures does not automatically mean knowing the will of God. If one exalts his own authority and tradition above the Word, he can hold the Scriptures in his hands and still oppose Jesus, the fulfiller of that Word.

They condemned Jesus to death, but since they were under the power of Rome, which then ruled Judea, they would hand Him over to the Gentiles to carry out the execution. The envy and false accusation of the religious leaders and the unjust judgment of the Gentile ruler together led to the death of Jesus. That both Jews and Gentiles took part in this event shows that sin does not belong to a particular nation or group but to all mankind.

That Jesus called Himself *"the Son of Man"* shows that He is the Son of God who came in a true human body. To take the sinner's place He had to become a man, and to bear the sins of all people He had to be a righteous One without sin. Jesus is the sinless Son of God, but He came in the flesh to suffer and

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die as the representative of mankind.

The mocking and spitting Jesus would suffer show not merely physical pain but that He would be thoroughly despised by people. Spitting was an act of treating someone as shameful and insulting him. The Creator was ridiculed and despised by the creatures He had made, yet He did not judge them at once but endured every shame to accomplish salvation.

Scourging was a cruel punishment that severely damaged the body of a person facing crucifixion. Jesus was without sin, yet He was treated like a sinner and punished. But His suffering must not be seen merely as an unjust martyrdom. Jesus received the judgment of sin in the sinner's place, in the state of having already borne all the sins of sinners.

By this time, Jesus had already taken the sins of everyone in the world upon His own body with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. When He was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He accepted all the sins of man, and carrying those sins He went up to Jerusalem. Therefore the Cross of Jesus was not a death that had nothing to do with sin, but the judgment of redemption that paid the price of all the sins of the world.

The reason Jesus had to shed His blood and die on the Cross was to pay the wages of the sins He had taken upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who had borne sins, had to die in the sinner's place. Jesus' baptism shows to whom sins passed on, and the blood of the Cross shows that the punishment of those sins was executed completely.

Jesus did not say only that He would die; He clearly foretold, "*the third day He will rise again.*" The death of the Cross was not Jesus' defeat or the end of the work of salvation. Jesus had to be buried and rise from the dead in three days,

overcoming sin and death and completing salvation.

The resurrection shows that the price of sin paid on the Cross was complete. Because Jesus bore all the judgment of sin, death could not keep holding Him. The resurrection also testifies that Jesus is not a mere human teacher or a failed religious leader but the Son of God, who rules life and death.

The fact that Jesus' foretelling was fulfilled exactly shows that the Cross and the resurrection were not stories the disciples made up later. Jesus knew specifically what would happen to Him, and according to that word He went up to Jerusalem, suffered, died, and rose again. Salvation is not an event that happened by chance but the work God ordained beforehand and Jesus Christ completed by obedience.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit does not demand only emotional pity for the suffering of Jesus. The sinner must know whose sins Jesus carried and why He was judged. When a sinner believes in his heart the word that all his sins passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and that Jesus carried those sins, died on the Cross, and rose again, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again.

The feeling of pitying Jesus' suffering cannot by itself obtain the remission of sin. Nor can the work of salvation be fully explained if one speaks only of the blood of the Cross and leaves out how He bore the sin of the world. Only when we believe Jesus' baptism, the death of the Cross, and the resurrection as one can we rightly receive the righteousness God has accomplished.

Even after hearing Jesus' foretelling of His suffering, the disciples thought in the very next passage about who would sit in the higher seat. The contrast is revealed: while Jesus was speaking of the Cross and the resurrection, the disciples'

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interest was in glory and high seats. Even walking the same road, the Lord's concern and man's concern can be entirely different. Jesus lowered Himself to save sinners, but the disciples thought of exalting themselves.

Today as well, people who gather in the name of Jesus can regard human position and success, the size of the organization, and the world's recognition as more important than the gospel. At the center of the church and of the gospel preacher must be the salvation Jesus accomplished for sinners. Whoever tries to exalt his own name and power by using the gospel walks the road opposite to the heart of Jesus, who went toward the Cross.

The sight of Jesus walking ahead of His disciples is also an important example for believers. A believer cannot redeem another person's sins by his own suffering, but in the course of preaching the gospel and following the will of God he may meet loss and fear. At such times he must not retreat at the sight of the difficulty before his eyes, but look to Jesus, who walked the way of salvation first.

This does not mean, however, that we must accept every affliction unconditionally as the will of God or deliberately create suffering. The suffering of Jesus is the only suffering of redemption, in which He was judged in the place of mankind's sins. Believers must not invite unnecessary danger but act wisely, while bearing, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, the unavoidable difficulties that come in keeping the gospel and the Word of God.

This passage shows that the death of Jesus was not an unexpected failure but the way He walked of His own accord to save sinners. Jesus knew all about the mocking and spitting, the scourging and death, and yet He went up to Jerusalem ahead of His disciples, and as He had said, He rose again in three days. The sinner must believe this gospel of the water and

the Spirit in his heart and receive the remission of sin and eternal life, and the saved must put the gospel before their own glory and follow the way of obedience the Lord walked.

## By giving His life as a ransom, Jesus showed that the true greatness of the kingdom of God lies in serving

*"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, 'Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.' And He said to them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said to Him, 'Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said to Him, 'We are able.' So Jesus said to them, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.' And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, 'You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'" (Mark 10:35–45).*

Jesus had just told His disciples that He would be mocked and scourged and killed in Jerusalem and would rise again in

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three days. But the interest of James and John was not in the suffering the Lord would undergo but in the seats they would occupy in the future. They thought that Jesus would obtain worldly kingship in Jerusalem, and they tried to be promised the highest seats in that glory in advance.

James and John first said, *"Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask."* They tried to obtain the Lord's consent before revealing what they were asking. But Jesus did not grant their demand at once; He asked, *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* Prayer is not a method of achieving one's own desires by God's power; it is also the process of bringing out before the Word whether the wish one harbors in his heart is fitting to the will of God.

They asked that in His glory one might sit on His right hand and the other on His left. They believed that Jesus is the Christ and would obtain glory, but they did not understand that the way to that glory was the way of suffering, death, and resurrection. The kingdom of God they expected was not greatly different from a worldly kingdom in which the one who takes the high seat rules over others. Even while claiming to follow the Lord, in their hearts they were trying to gain power, recognition, and honor.

Jesus said, *"You do not know what you ask."* The seats they asked for were not simply seats of splendid honor. The glory of Jesus was the glory that appears after He humbled Himself, suffered, and gave His life to save sinners. Trying to obtain only the glorious seat while avoiding the way of the Cross was a wish that came from not knowing the work of Christ.

The *"cup that I drink"* of which Jesus spoke refers to the suffering and death He would receive. *"The baptism that I am baptized with"* is also, in this context, a figurative expression for being completely immersed in suffering and death. This

does not mean that the disciples would repeat the same event as the baptism Jesus received from John at the Jordan River. Jesus' bearing the sin of the world through His baptism was the work of redemption that only the sinless Savior could accomplish. The disciples would later go through persecution and sacrifice as they preached the gospel, but their sufferings do not wash away anyone's sins.

James and John answered confidently, *"We are able."* But they did not yet know how weak they were. When Jesus was arrested, the disciples all abandoned Him and fled. A person easily boasts that he can bear even great suffering, but the power of faith does not come from human resolve. Only one who has received the remission of sin and the help of the Holy Spirit can endure afflictions for the gospel and follow the Lord to the end.

Jesus said that they would drink His cup and be baptized with the baptism He receives. In fact, James was martyred while preaching the gospel, and John also went through many afflictions because of the gospel. But their sufferings were not merits for occupying high seats; they were the result of following the Lord and the gospel. No one can present the sufferings he received for the gospel before God and demand the seat of glory.

To sit on the Lord's right and left was not a seat obtained by human friendship or competition. It was the seat God would give to those for whom it was prepared according to His will. The kingdom of God is not a place where ranks are decided by personal requests or power struggles. God judges not by a person's outward appearance and self-boasting but according to faith and faithfulness. Therefore believers must not fight to gain a seat higher than others, but must faithfully carry out the work God has entrusted to them.

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When the ten disciples heard it, they were greatly displeased with James and John. It is hard to see their anger as purely righteous. Earlier also, the disciples had argued with one another over who was the greatest. When James and John demanded the high seats ahead of them, the competitiveness in the hearts of the other disciples was also exposed. Since one can criticize another's greed while harboring the same desire oneself, believers must examine their own hearts before judging others.

Jesus called the disciples and said that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over the people and their great ones exercise authority over them. The power of the world is often used as a means by which the one above dominates those below and accomplishes his own will. People think of the man who can command many as the great man. But Jesus made it clear that the order of the kingdom of God must be different from the power structure of the world, saying, *"it shall not be so among you."*

Offices and authority within the church also must not become means of dominating people or exalting oneself. The one entrusted with the Word must not be a person who forces his own thoughts on others, but a person who feeds and protects souls with the Word of God. The higher the office, the more responsibility one must bear, serving those entrusted to him rather than receiving more honor. The authority given within the gospel is not a power that presses people down but a responsibility for saving lives and leading them in the right way.

Jesus said that whoever desires to become great must become a servant, and whoever desires to be first must become a slave of all. This does not mean granting people's every demand unconditionally or overlooking unrighteousness. True

serving is not flattering people but doing what is actually profitable for their souls. Sometimes pointing out sin and delivering the right word is also included in the serving of love. The standard of serving must be not man's desires but the Word of God.

The perfect example of such serving is Jesus Christ. Jesus left the glory of heaven and came to this earth in the flesh to save sinners. Though He is the King of kings, He did not seek to be waited on by people; He healed the sick and preached the gospel to the poor. At last He gave even His own life for sinners. The serving of Jesus did not end with showing an example of humble living; it was completed in the work of redemption that actually saves sinners.

In the word *"to give His life a ransom for many,"* the ransom means the price paid in another's place to set a slave or captive free. All people were bound under sin and could not escape death, the wages of sin, and the judgment of God. Since that price could not be paid with possessions or good deeds, with prayers of repentance or religious sacrifices, the Son of God gave His own life in their place. It was not that sinners saved themselves, but that Jesus paid the price of salvation completely for sinners.

Jesus first took upon His own body all the sins of everyone in the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. When the sinless Son of God was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all the sins of sinners passed on to Him. Therefore Jesus, as the Lamb of God carrying the sin of the world, went to the Cross, shed His blood and died, and received in our place the punishment of sin we deserved. This is the concrete content of His giving His life as a ransom.

After dying on the Cross, Jesus was buried and rose again

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in three days. He bore all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins with the blood of the Cross, and by rising again He overcame sin and death and completed salvation. Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection are one work of salvation that cannot be separated. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again as a child of God.

A person does not obtain the remission of sin by serving others much. Serving is not a price paid to receive salvation but the fruit of faith that appears in the one saved freely by Jesus' redemption. Whoever believes that all his sins have disappeared and has received the Holy Spirit no longer tries to prove his own worth through worldly status and recognition. Within the grace of having already become a child of God, he gives himself to saving other souls and preaching the gospel.

This passage contrasts the image of James and John, who followed the Lord to gain power, with the image of Jesus, who came to give Himself without trying to gain anything. The wish a believer should harbor is not to occupy a seat higher than others, but to serve so that one soul may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin. Doing the work entrusted for the gospel and caring for souls is the precious serving in the kingdom of God.

This passage teaches that true greatness lies not in how many people one dominates but in how much one serves people with the gospel. James and John sought the Lord's right and left, but Jesus showed the way of giving His own life as a ransom. Whoever has been saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not contend over seats and honor, but must follow the Lord who saved him, serve other souls from a

low place, and preach to them the gospel of the complete remission of sin.

## Bartimaeus acknowledged his blind condition and sought mercy from Jesus, the Son of David, and so he received his sight and became one who followed the Lord

*"Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.' And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' The blind man said to Him, 'Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Go your way; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road" (Mark 10:46–52).*

Jesus was passing through Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, heading for Jerusalem. There Jesus had to receive the suffering and death of the Cross to save sinners. Yet even while walking such a momentous road, Jesus did not pass by the cry of one man sitting by the roadside. In the world, the cry of one nameless beggar can be drowned out by the voices of the many, but the Lord heard the voice of one soul pleading for His mercy.

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Because Bartimaeus could not see, he had to sit by the roadside and live by begging from others. He could neither open his eyes by his own strength nor live without the help others gave. His physical blindness and poverty make us think of the spiritual state of man under sin. Until a person looks at himself in the light of the Word of God, he cannot rightly see his sin and the coming judgment, nor can he remove his sin or obtain eternal life by his own deeds.

But though Bartimaeus could not see, he could hear. As soon as he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he cried out and called on the Lord. Faith does not arise after one has confirmed everything with his own eyes; it begins with hearing the Word of God and receiving that Word into the heart. The sinner must first hear the word of the gospel, and through that word he must know who it is that will save him.

People told him of *"Jesus of Nazareth,"* but Bartimaeus called out, *"Jesus, Son of David." "Son of David"* is the title that refers to the Christ whom God promised to send through the lineage of David. Bartimaeus did not think of Jesus merely as a healer of diseases or a teacher from Nazareth. He believed that Jesus was the King promised by God, the One who could solve his desperate situation.

Many who could see followed Jesus around and yet did not know His true work of salvation. Just before this, James and John had asked for the high seats in the Lord's glory. In contrast, Bartimaeus, blind in the flesh, acknowledged that he had no qualification and no ability, and sought only the Lord's mercy. Seeing Jesus with the eyes of the flesh and knowing Him in the heart as the Savior are not the same. The one whose spiritual eyes are opened does not put forward his own merits but seeks the grace of Jesus Christ.

Bartimaeus cried out, *"have mercy on me!"* He did not say

that he was better than others or that he had merits deserving help. He did not hide his miserable condition but depended on the Lord's compassion. When a sinner comes to God, he likewise cannot present his good deeds or religious zeal as conditions of salvation. He must acknowledge that he is a sinner who cannot escape from sin by himself, and accept the salvation God has prepared.

Many people rebuked Bartimaeus and told him to be quiet, but he cried out all the more. People's reactions are not always the same as the will of Jesus. The crowd saw Bartimaeus as a nuisance, but Jesus saw him as one soul that must be saved. We must not give up seeking the Savior because of people's blame, religious prejudice, or our own shame. If we have heard the gospel and realized our sin, we must regard the Lord's word as more important than other people's evaluation.

Jesus stopped on His way and told them to call Bartimaeus. When the Lord's call came, the very people who had rebuked him said, *"Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."* What raised Bartimaeus up was not the goodwill of the people around him but the fact that Jesus had called him. The ground on which a sinner can be saved likewise lies not in his circumstances or feelings but in Jesus Christ, who calls sinners and has completed salvation.

Bartimaeus threw aside his garment, rose up quickly, and came to Jesus. To a blind beggar the garment may have been a thing needed to protect his body and to live, but when he heard the Lord's call he did not delay. However, there is no need to interpret this garment definitively as a particular sin or as the righteousness of the Law. What the passage clearly shows is that Bartimaeus regarded coming to the Lord as more important than anything else. Faith is not lingering in hesitation after hearing the Word, but coming to the Lord in reliance on

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that Word.

Jesus asked Bartimaeus, *"What do you want Me to do for you?"* The Lord did not ask because He did not know what he wanted. He was leading Bartimaeus to confess his need clearly. Earlier, when Jesus asked James and John what they wanted, they sought the high seats, but Bartimaeus answered, *"Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."* These two wishes show that we should harbor the spiritual wish that the blind may receive their sight, rather than the wish to gain the power of the flesh.

For a sinner to be saved, he must first acknowledge that his spiritual eyes are blind. If he thinks that he has known God well from the beginning and can live righteously, he cannot realize his need of the true gospel. The Law exposes man's sin and makes him know that he cannot become righteous by himself, and the gospel shows the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished for such sinners. The opening of the spiritual eyes is turning from making one's own thoughts the standard of truth and seeing the Word of God just as it is.

Jesus said, *"Go your way; your faith has made you well."* This does not mean that Bartimaeus' faith was itself the power that healed his eyes. The One who healed him was Jesus, and his faith was that he knew Jesus as the Savior, the Son of David, and came forward relying on His power and mercy. Saving faith is not believing in one's own conviction or earnestness, but believing in Jesus Christ, who accomplishes salvation, and in His word.

The event in which Bartimaeus recovered his physical sight shows that Jesus is the Christ and has the power to make the blind see. But this verse must not be stretched into a promise that every believer is healed of physical disease the moment he believes. The healing of the body was a sign showing the power of Jesus, and the more fundamental salvation is that the

sinner receives the remission of sin and obtains eternal life.

Jesus Himself accomplished all the work of salvation to open the spiritual eyes of sinners. First, with the baptism He received from John, He took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world. And carrying those sins, He went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the punishment of sin we deserved. Jesus was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and becoming the perfect Savior.

Whoever believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. To the one who believes the gospel, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift and opens his spiritual eyes to know that he has become a child of God. The remission of sin is not the reward of long crying out or of piling up many merits, but the grace received by believing in the righteousness Jesus completed.

After receiving his sight, Bartimaeus did not go back and sit in his former place; he followed Jesus on the road. His following the Lord was not a condition for opening his eyes but the result that appeared after he had already received grace. In the same way, that a person who has received the remission of sin serves the gospel and follows the Lord is not a price paid to obtain salvation. Because he knows the grace that saved him from sin and judgment, he takes part in the Lord's way following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The born-again must harbor the wish that blind souls, like Bartimaeus, would hear the gospel and open their spiritual eyes. Though that wish may look small at first, like a mustard seed, it can become the starting point that leads us to preach the gospel and serve souls. Believers must harbor, more than the wish to

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gain high seats and the world's recognition, the heart that longs for those who have not yet received the remission of sin to hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and be saved.

This passage shows what the faith is that acknowledges one's own lack and seeks the mercy of Jesus Christ. Bartimaeus was a man who could not see and had nothing, but he believed in Jesus, the Son of David, and cried out, and when he heard the Lord's call he came without delay. And after his eyes were opened, he followed the Lord on the road. Whoever has had his spiritual eyes opened through the gospel of the water and the Spirit must likewise follow Jesus, who saved him, rather than seeking his own righteousness and the glory of the world, and must preach the gospel of the complete remission of sin to the souls that do not yet see. ✉

# Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 10

## [Question] 1. Against what regional background do the events recorded in Mark chapter 10 unfold?

The events of Mark chapter 10 unfold against the background of the road on which Jesus, having finished His ministry in Galilee, moves southward toward Jerusalem.

Verse 1 records that Jesus went to *"the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan."* The region of Judea refers to the southern area where Jerusalem is located, and the other side of the Jordan is generally understood as the region of Perea, east of the Jordan River. In this region Jesus taught the multitudes that gathered to Him again, disputed with the Pharisees about divorce, and blessed the little children. He also spoke with the man of great possessions about eternal life, and taught His disciples about riches and the kingdom of God.

Afterward, Jesus and His disciples entered the road going up to Jerusalem. On this road Jesus said again that He would be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes in Jerusalem, be mocked and scourged by the Gentiles, be killed, and live again in three days. The request of James and John, and the teaching that one must become a servant, were also given during this journey.

In the latter part of the chapter, Jesus and His disciples arrive at Jericho. Jericho was a city in the Jordan valley that lay on the way up to Jerusalem. As Jesus went out of Jericho, He met the blind beggar Bartimaeus, who was sitting by the road,

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and opened his eyes. Bartimaeus immediately received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

Therefore, the geographical background of Mark chapter 10 is not limited to one place. It is a course of movement that begins in the region of Judea and Perea east of the Jordan, passes along the road going up to Jerusalem, and reaches Jericho. This shows that Jesus' ministry in Galilee had ended and that His final journey toward Jerusalem, to accomplish the death of the Cross and the resurrection from the dead, had begun in earnest.

## [Question] 2. Mark 10:2—what was the purpose of the Pharisees' question to Jesus about divorce?

The Pharisees asked about divorce not to learn purely the will of God concerning marriage, but to test Jesus and trap Him in a snare. The passage records that they asked, *"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"*

In Jewish society of that day, interpretations were divided over what grounds were required for divorce. If Jesus supported one side's view, He could provoke the opposition of the other side; if He opposed divorce, they could attack Him for going against the Law, in which Moses had a certificate of divorce written; and if, on the contrary, He answered that one could divorce easily, they could accuse Him of taking lightly God's order of creation and the sanctity of marriage.

It is also important that this region, beyond the Jordan, was under the influence of Herod Antipas. John the Baptist had been killed for rebuking Herod for taking Herodias, his brother's wife. Therefore, it is also possible that the Pharisees intended to use Jesus' answer to place Him in a politically

dangerous position.

Their question, therefore, was not a simple discussion of Scripture; it was an evil test that used the much-disputed question of divorce to condemn Jesus by the Law or to drive Him into political difficulty.

## [Question] 3. Mark 10:3–9—how did Jesus answer the Pharisees who tested Him with the question of divorce?

Jesus did not immediately answer the Pharisees with approval or disapproval, but first asked, *"What did Moses command you?"* The Pharisees answered that Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and put his wife away.

Then Jesus said that Moses wrote the regulation concerning the certificate of divorce because of the hardness of people's hearts. This regulation did not acknowledge or encourage divorce as the good will of God; it was a measure to protect the one being abandoned and to restrain disorder in the reality where hardened hearts were already breaking marriage relationships. The Pharisees used this permissive regulation as a right to divorce, but Jesus spoke of God's purpose of creation, which precedes that regulation.

Jesus said, *"from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female,'"* revealing that marriage did not begin from man's convenience or contract but was established within God's order of creation. He taught that since a man leaves his parents and is joined to his wife and the two become one flesh, the two who are married are no longer two but one flesh.

Becoming one flesh does not mean physical union only. It means that husband and wife become one community before

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God, sharing life and living together, taking responsibility for each other and loving each other. Therefore, the marriage relationship must not be joined and broken lightly according to one's own desires or feelings.

Finally, Jesus declared, *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."* Marriage is not a relationship that man makes and dissolves at will but a covenant in which God has joined two people as one flesh, so both must keep that relationship preciously, loving and serving each other.

Jesus' answer, therefore, goes beyond the legal dispute of the Pharisees, who argued over the conditions under which divorce is permitted. Jesus made them look at God's first will rather than the limited regulation given because of man's hardness, and He taught the sanctity of marriage and the responsibility of husband and wife to live as one flesh.

## [Question] 4. Mark 10:10–12—what did Jesus say to the disciples who asked Him again about divorce in the house?

Jesus said to the disciples, *"Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."*

In those days some regarded it as a husband's right to abandon his wife for his own convenience, but Jesus taught clearly that breaking the covenant of marriage in that way and marrying another person is committing adultery against one's original spouse. He also said that it is likewise adultery when a wife abandons her husband and marries another.

This means that the responsibility for marriage lies with

both husband and wife, and that neither side may lightly cut off the relationship God has joined together according to his or her own desires or feelings. Jesus took God's order of creation, not the custom of the day, as the standard, and taught that husband and wife must faithfully keep the covenant of being one flesh.

## [Question] 5. Mark 10:13—how did the disciples react to the little children coming to Jesus?

When people brought little children, wanting Jesus to touch them, the disciples rebuked them.

The disciples did not regard the little children's coming to Jesus as important, and thinking that they were a hindrance to Jesus' ministry, they rebuked them. So they tried to stop not only the little children but also those who brought them.

This shows that the disciples had not yet realized that even those who are weak like little children and regarded as small by society are precious to Jesus.

## [Question] 6. Mark 10:14–16—when Jesus saw the disciples stopping the children, what did He say?

When Jesus saw the disciples stopping the little children, He was greatly displeased and said, "*Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.*" He then taught, "*whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.*"

Jesus was greatly displeased because the disciples were treating the little children as insignificant and blocking their way to the Lord. To Jesus, even a little child without social

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position or ability was a precious soul. Therefore, no one may hinder anyone from coming to Jesus or block his opportunity to hear the gospel on the ground that he is small and weak.

The word that the kingdom of God is *"of such"* does not mean that little children have no sin at all, or that being young is itself a condition of salvation. A little child cannot put forward his own ability and merit, and depends on and receives what his parents give. In the same way, whoever enters the kingdom of God must not put forward his own righteousness and good deeds, but must acknowledge that he is spiritually helpless and believe in the salvation God has freely given just as the Word says.

The kingdom of God is not something built up by man's effort or obtained by qualification; it is received as the gift of God. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then completed salvation by rising from the dead. A person must not correct this gospel with his own thoughts or add his own deeds to it; as a little child receives his parents' words, he must believe the word concerning the salvation God has accomplished just as it is.

When He had finished speaking, Jesus took the little children in His arms Himself and blessed them, laying His hands on them. This shows that Jesus did not regard the little children as a nuisance but received them in love. It also teaches the disciples that they must not draw near only to the high and important, but must receive and bless the small and the weak with the heart of the Lord.

## [Question] 7. Mark 10:17—what problem of faith appears in the question of the man who asked what he must do to inherit eternal life?

The man ran up to Jesus, knelt before Him, and asked, *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* In his behavior appear a seriousness that longs for eternal life and an attitude of respect for Jesus. But in the words *"what shall I do,"* which stand at the center of his question, a wrong faith is revealed—that of trying to obtain eternal life by his own deeds and merits.

He did not think of eternal life as a gift that God gives freely, but as a reward he could receive by doing some additional good work. He considered that he had kept the commandments well from his youth, and that if he received just one more good teaching from Jesus, he could complete his qualification for eternal life. This is a legalistic faith that trusts one's own deeds and establishes one's own righteousness.

Moreover, he called Jesus *"Good Teacher,"* but he did not clearly know who Jesus is. He looked at Jesus only as a human teacher who would add an excellent teaching, and did not fully know Him as the Son of God and the Savior, who bears all his sins and gives eternal life. What man needs is not merely better moral instruction but Jesus Christ, who saves from sin.

The Law was not given so that a person might prove his own goodness and obtain eternal life. Its role is to make him realize his sin and inability before God's perfect commandments and come to the Savior. But this man, rather than realizing his sin through the Law, held the conviction that he had kept the commandments well. His later failure to give up his possessions reveals that he depended on his possessions more than on God, while not knowing his own sin and lack.

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Eternal life is not wages that a person earns by doing something; it is the gift of God, received by believing in the salvation Jesus completed. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all regardless of his own deeds, receives the Holy Spirit, is born again, and obtains eternal life.

Therefore, the problem of faith that appears in this man's question is that he placed the ground of eternal life not on the salvation God accomplished but on his own deeds and righteousness. Whoever would be saved must not first ask, "What more must I do?" but must examine, "What has Jesus accomplished for me, and do I believe that word?" Good deeds and obedience are not conditions for obtaining eternal life, but the fruit of faith borne by the one who has received eternal life by believing the gospel.

## [Question] 8. Mark 10:18–21—what did Jesus say to the man who asked how to obtain eternal life?

Jesus first said, *"Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God."* This was not a word by which Jesus denied His own goodness or His deity. Because the man was calling Him *"good"* while thinking of Him merely as a good human teacher, Jesus made him look back at who he knew Jesus to be when he called Him so, telling him that only God is truly good.

This word also teaches that there is no one among men who can reach God's perfect goodness by his own deeds. The man

thought he could obtain eternal life by doing more good works, but Jesus first presented as the standard not human goodness but the perfect goodness of God.

Jesus then spoke the commandments: *"'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"* The man answered that he had kept all these commandments from his youth. He thought he had kept the Law well, judging only by outwardly visible deeds, and did not see the greed, the idols, and the self-righteousness in his heart.

Jesus looked at him, loved him, and said, *"One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."* Jesus exposed his lack not to condemn him and drive him away, but out of love, to make him realize his state of being bound to self-righteousness and possessions and to bring him to the true Savior.

The *"One thing"* he lacked was not simply one good deed of distributing his property. He thought he had kept all the commandments, but in reality he loved and depended on his possessions more than on God. The word to sell all his possessions and give to the poor exposed the idol of wealth that was ruling his heart. The word *"and come, take up the cross, and follow Me"* was the demand not to depend on possessions and self-righteousness, but to believe in and follow Jesus as his Savior and Master.

This word is not a universal condition of salvation, requiring everyone to sell all his property in order to obtain eternal life. Even the act of distributing all one's property cannot remove a person's sin. To the man who thought he could obtain eternal life by keeping the Law, Jesus presented the full demand of the Law and made him realize that eternal

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life cannot be obtained by human strength.

Eternal life is not obtained as the price of abandoning wealth or piling up good deeds; it is received by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, is born again, and obtains eternal life.

Therefore, Jesus' word demanded of the man that he throw away the faith that depends on his own goodness and deeds, treasure Jesus more than the wealth that had become the idol of his heart, and believe in and follow the salvation He accomplished.

## [Question] 9. Mark 10:21–22—how did the man react when he heard the word to sell all he had and follow Jesus?

When the man heard Jesus' word, he became sad and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

At first he ran to Jesus and knelt down, wanting to obtain eternal life, but he could not obey the word to sell all his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Jesus. He wanted eternal life, but he could not give up the great wealth he depended on and loved.

His sadness and sorrow show that Jesus' word had exposed his heart precisely. He was confident that he had kept all the commandments, but in reality he treasured his possessions more than God and eternal life. In the end he chose the way of possessing his wealth over following Jesus, and left the Lord.

## [Question] 10. Mark 10:23–27—after the man with great possessions left, what did Jesus say to His disciples?

When the man with great possessions went away sorrowful, Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, *"How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"* When the disciples were astonished at this word, Jesus said again, *"Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!"*

Jesus went on to say, *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."* It is impossible for a camel to pass through an actual needle's eye. Through this strong figure, Jesus taught that it is impossible for a person who depends on riches and cannot give up his possessions to enter the kingdom of God by his own strength.

This does not mean that riches themselves are sin, or that no one who has property can be saved. The problem lies in the heart being rich with wealth and making it the ground of one's life and security. Whoever has much wealth easily thinks he can provide for himself whatever he needs, and may depend on money and his own ability more than on God. The man in the preceding passage also wanted eternal life, but he treasured his possessions more than Jesus and left the Lord.

Hearing Jesus' word, the disciples were greatly astonished and asked, *"Who then can be saved?"* Since in those days there was the thought that wealth was evidence of having received God's blessing, they wondered who on earth could be saved if even the rich could hardly enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus looked at them and answered, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are*

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*possible."* This word is the conclusion of the passage. Not only for the rich but for all people, it is impossible to obtain salvation by their own deeds and abilities. Man cannot remove his sins and obtain eternal life by the act of giving up wealth or by the effort of keeping the commandments. Salvation must be accomplished by God alone.

God has completed, through Jesus Christ, the salvation that man cannot accomplish. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead. When a person believes this gospel in his heart, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, is born again, and enters the kingdom of God.

Therefore, Jesus' word was not simply a censure of the rich; it made everyone who depends on wealth and his own righteousness realize that no one can be saved by human strength. A person must lay down what he has depended on and believe in God, who completed the impossible salvation, and in His gospel.

## [Question] 11. What did Peter say to Jesus in Mark 10:28?

Peter said to Jesus, *"See, we have left all and followed You."*

Unlike the man with great possessions, who could not give up what he owned and left, Peter and the other disciples had left their livelihoods, their families, and their familiar lives behind and followed Jesus. Peter was telling Jesus that their choice had been different from that man's.

But it can also be seen that in these words lay the heart that

wanted to confirm what reward they would receive, since they had left everything and followed. Jesus went on to acknowledge the disciples' sacrifice, while teaching that what those who have left things for the gospel receive includes persecutions as well, and that the first may become last.

## [Question] 12. Mark 10:29–31—what did Jesus answer Peter?

Jesus said that whoever has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for His sake and the gospel's will receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands—with persecutions, and that there is no one who will not receive eternal life in the age to come. He then said, *"many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

This word is the promise that God does not forget what has been sacrificed for Jesus and the gospel. To the one who has followed the Lord while bearing his family's opposition or loss of property, God grants new brothers and sisters and family in the faith, and enables him to live by sharing what is needed with others within the church community. Even on this earth, He gives a spiritual family and care far more abundant than what was laid down for the Lord.

The word *"hundredfold"* is not a promise of mechanical material compensation, as if one would certainly receive back exactly a hundred times the abandoned property in cash or land. God knows the needs of the one who lives for the gospel, cares for him through many people and circumstances, and gives the community of faith and spiritual blessings that cannot be compared with the wealth of the world.

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Together with these blessings, Jesus said clearly, "*with persecutions.*" Following the Lord does not mean that all afflictions disappear and one only becomes wealthy in the world. Because one believes and preaches the gospel, he may be misunderstood and rejected by family or people, and may lose property or social standing. Therefore, the way of the disciple is not a way of looking only for rewards on this earth, but a way of treasuring and following Jesus and the gospel most of all, even amid persecutions.

The word about receiving eternal life in the age to come does not mean that the act of leaving house, family, and property becomes the price that buys eternal life. Eternal life is the gift of God, received by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished. The life of laying down everything and following the Lord and the gospel is not a merit for obtaining eternal life, but the fruit of faith and obedience shown by the one who has already believed in Jesus and received eternal life. That eternal life will appear in the age to come as an incorruptible body and the perfect life of the kingdom of God.

Finally, the word "*many who are first will be last, and the last first*" is a warning given so that Peter and the disciples would not boast of their sacrifice or think themselves entitled to a higher reward than others. Even one who was called first and has given up much can become last if he becomes proud and puts forward his own merits, and even one who was called late can become first if he humbly believes and is faithful.

Jesus' answer, therefore, teaches that God's care on this earth and the glorious life of the age to come are promised for the sacrifices made for the Lord and the gospel, but that persecutions also follow, and no one may boast of his own sacrifice as merit.

## [Question] 13. Mark 10:32—what does the sight of Jesus going up to Jerusalem ahead of His disciples teach us?

The sight of Jesus going up to Jerusalem ahead of His disciples shows His willing obedience and resolve: though He knew all the suffering and death that would come upon Him, He did not retreat one step in order to fulfill the will of God.

Jesus already knew that in Jerusalem He would be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, be condemned to death, be handed over to the Gentiles, be mocked, spat upon, scourged, and killed. Nevertheless, He was not seized and dragged along; He walked the road ahead of them Himself. This shows that Jesus' death was not an unexpected defeat but a sacrifice He chose of His own accord to save mankind.

Jesus had taken upon Himself all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John, and He headed for Jerusalem to be judged on the Cross carrying those sins. And after dying on the Cross, He rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation. Therefore, the road Jesus walked ahead of them was not a mere journey but the road of salvation for accomplishing the remission of everyone's sin.

The disciples were amazed to see Jesus going ahead, and those who followed Him were afraid. They sensed to some degree what danger awaited in Jerusalem, but they had not yet fully realized the work of salvation Jesus would accomplish. Jesus did not merely urge on the disciples who stayed behind in fear; He led them by walking the road of suffering first Himself. This teaches that a true leader must first obey the will of God and serve before demanding sacrifice of others.

A believer cannot bear the sin of mankind or complete

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salvation as Jesus did. That is the work that only Jesus, the Son of God, can do. But whoever believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished and follows Him must obey the will of God without putting his own thoughts and comfort first, even when difficulty and persecution are expected.

Therefore, the sight of Jesus going up to Jerusalem ahead of His disciples shows the Lord's love for saving us and His unshaken obedience. At the same time, it teaches that believers also must put the Word of God before fear and follow in faith the road the Lord walked first.

## [Question] 14. Mark 10:33–34—what did Jesus say about the things that would happen to Him in Jerusalem?

Jesus said that in Jerusalem He would be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and that they would condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles would mock Him, spit on Him, scourge Him, and kill Him, but Jesus foretold that He would rise again three days after His death.

This word shows that Jesus knew in advance not only the rejection, the trial, the mocking, and the death He would suffer, but also the resurrection from the dead. Therefore, the death of the Cross was not a misfortune or failure that suddenly befell Jesus, but what would take place according to the plan of salvation God had ordained.

## [Question] 15. Mark 10:35–37—what did James and John ask of Jesus?

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Jesus and said that they wanted Him to do for them whatever they asked. When Jesus asked what they wanted Him to do, they requested that when He was in His glory, one of them might sit on His right hand and the other on His left.

To sit on Jesus' right and left means to occupy the highest and most honored seats in His kingdom. The two disciples thought that Jesus would soon establish a glorious kingdom, and they wished to obtain the highest positions in that kingdom.

Just before this, Jesus had said that He would be mocked and scourged and killed in Jerusalem, but James and John were more interested in the glory and the seats they would receive than in the Lord's suffering. This shows that they were still understanding Jesus' kingdom and the way of the disciple from the perspective of worldly power and honor.

## [Question] 16. In Mark 10:38–40, how did Jesus answer the request of James and John?

Jesus first said to James and John, *"You do not know what you ask."* They only wanted to share in Jesus' glory and obtain the high seats; they did not know the meaning of the suffering and death Jesus would undergo before reaching that glory.

Jesus then asked, *"Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"* Here the *"cup"* refers to the suffering and death Jesus would bear, and the *"baptism"* is also a figurative expression for entering into suffering and death as if being completely

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immersed in them.

This ‘baptism of suffering’ must be distinguished from the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist at the beginning of His public ministry. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind, and carrying those sins He was judged on the Cross and died. But the baptism spoken of in verse 38 is a figure for the suffering and death He would undergo.

James and John answered that they could drink that cup and receive that baptism. Jesus said that they would indeed drink His cup and share in the baptism of suffering He receives. This does not mean that they would take over Jesus’ saving work or accomplish the atoning death together with Him; it means that they would suffer afflictions and persecutions for the gospel in the future.

But Jesus said that to sit on His right and His left was not His to give at will; those for whom it was prepared would obtain it. The seats of the kingdom of God are not decided by human friendship or by the ambition of whoever asks first, but are given according to God’s will and preparation.

Jesus’ answer, therefore, awakens James and John to the fact that they sought only the seats of glory without knowing the suffering and the serving that lay before them. A disciple must not demand high seats, but must follow Jesus, bearing afflictions for the gospel, and entrust himself to the will and the reward God has ordained.

## [Question] 17. Mark 10:41–45—what is the principle of true serving that Jesus taught through the purpose for which the Son of Man came into the world?

When the ten disciples heard that James and John had asked for the seats on Jesus' right and left, they were greatly displeased with the two. But the other disciples were displeased because the same desire to obtain the high seats was in them as well. So Jesus taught how the way of worldly power differs from the serving of the kingdom of God.

The rulers of the world lord it over people, and their great ones exercise their authority over others. They consider it greatness to rise to a high seat and receive the service and obedience of others. But Jesus said, *"it shall not be so among you."* A disciple of the kingdom of God must not use authority for his own benefit and honor.

Jesus taught that whoever among the disciples desires to become great must become one who serves others, and whoever desires to be first must become a slave of all. The truly great person in the kingdom of God is not the one who dominates others and is waited on, but the one who humbles himself, looks after the needs of others, and labors to save their souls.

Jesus did not teach this principle with words only; He showed it Himself with His life and His work of salvation. The word *"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve"* means that Jesus, who is God in His very nature and worthy to receive worship and service from all people, humbled Himself and came to this earth to save those bound by sin and death.

That Jesus gives His life as *"a ransom for many"* means

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that He gives His own life as the price to set free those who have become slaves of sin and are to be judged. Man cannot pay the price of his sins or rescue himself from death by good deeds and religious efforts. Therefore Jesus bore sin and received the judgment in man's place.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon His own body all the sins of all mankind once and for all. And carrying those sins, He received the judgment of sin on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and then completed salvation by rising from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, is born again, and is set free from the power of sin and death. This is the greatest and most perfect serving, by which Jesus served mankind, giving His own life as a ransom.

A believer's serving of others is not something added to Jesus' work of redemption, nor a work done to obtain salvation by his own good deeds. It is that the one who has first received the remission of sin and new life through Jesus' serving cares for others out of gratitude for that love, preaches the gospel, and uses the authority and possessions entrusted to him for saving souls.

Therefore, the principle of true serving does not lie in occupying a high seat and ruling over people. It lies in laying down one's own benefit and honor as Jesus did, serving everyone from a low place, and especially giving oneself so that souls bound in sin may hear the gospel and be saved. The true greatness of the kingdom of God lies not in wielding power but in sacrificing in love and saving lives.

## [Question] 18. Mark 10:46—where did Jesus meet the blind beggar Bartimaeus?

Jesus met the blind beggar Bartimaeus, who was sitting by the road, as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude.

Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, could not see, so he lived sitting by the road and asking people for help. He came to meet the Lord on the road where Jesus was passing through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem.

## [Question] 19. Mark 10:47–48—what can we learn from the attitude of Bartimaeus, who cried out to Jesus to have mercy on him?

When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he cried out loudly, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* He could not see Jesus with the eyes of the flesh, but through what he had heard he believed that Jesus is the Christ whom God promised. In the title *"Son of David"* is contained the faith that acknowledges Jesus not as a mere healer or teacher but as the promised King and Savior.

Bartimaeus did not hide his miserable and helpless condition or put forward his pride. Since he could not see and could not escape his situation by his own strength, he did not claim any right before Jesus but pleaded with Him to have mercy on him. This shows that whoever would receive God's mercy must first honestly acknowledge his own spiritual condition and inability.

Many people rebuked Bartimaeus and told him to be quiet, but he did not give up and cried out all the more. Neither

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people's judgment and criticism nor his own low position could stop him from coming to Jesus. With the desperate heart that if he missed the chance of Jesus' passing by he could never open his eyes again, he sought the Lord's help to the end. We also must not give up hearing the gospel and coming to Jesus because of people's judgment or religious hindrance.

His repeated crying out was not itself a merit that bought salvation. What matters is not the number of loud cries or the intensity of emotion, but that he believed that Jesus alone could solve his problem and sought help from Him. True faith does not depend on one's own ability but on the power and mercy of Jesus.

Bartimaeus' physical blindness makes us think of the spiritual state of the person who cannot see the Word of God and his own sins. Whoever depends on his own righteousness and religious deeds does not know that he is a pitiful person, spiritually blind, and so he does not earnestly seek the Savior. But whoever acknowledges that he cannot help committing sin continually and cannot remove his sins by himself comes to realize that the salvation of Jesus is absolutely necessary for him.

Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then completed salvation by rising from the dead. Just as Bartimaeus believed in Jesus' mercy and power and cried out, whoever acknowledges his spiritual blindness and inability and believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, and is born again.

Therefore, the attitude of Bartimaeus teaches that we must honestly acknowledge our pitiful and helpless condition, refuse to retreat before people's hindrance, and seek the Lord's mercy with the faith that Jesus alone can save us.

## [Question] 20. Mark 10:49–50—how did Bartimaeus act when he heard that Jesus was calling him?

When Jesus stood still and commanded that Bartimaeus be called, the people said to him, *"Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."* Hearing this, Bartimaeus threw aside his garment, rose up quickly, and came to Jesus.

Though he could not see, when he heard Jesus' call he did not hesitate or merely wait for other people's help. Laying down even the garment that must have been important to him, he rose at once and came to Jesus. This shows how joyfully and earnestly he received the Lord's call.

The passage does not directly explain any special spiritual meaning in the garment. But in Bartimaeus' act of throwing aside his garment we can see the attitude of responding quickly, without being bound to anything that could hinder his coming to Jesus. Faith is this: when one hears the Lord's call, he does not look only at his circumstances and obstacles, but relies on that word and comes to Jesus at once.

## [Question] 21. Mark 10:51–52—how do verses 51 and 52 state the reason the blind beggar Bartimaeus was healed?

When Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted Him to do for him, he answered clearly, *"Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."* Then Jesus said, *"Go your way; your faith has made you well."* The passage says that Bartimaeus believed in Jesus, and that Jesus healed his eyes in answer to that faith.

Bartimaeus believed that Jesus is the Christ, who could

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open his eyes. Without putting forward his own ability or good deeds, he depended only on Jesus' mercy and power and asked to receive his sight. His faith, therefore, was not mere positive thinking but the faith that entrusted himself to Jesus, who is able to save.

His loud crying and his casting off his garment did not themselves pay the price of the healing. These actions were the outward expression of the faith already in his heart, and the power that actually opened his eyes came from the word of Jesus.

When Jesus spoke, Bartimaeus immediately received his sight, and he did not go back on his own way but followed Jesus on the road. This shows that true faith does not end with receiving the Lord's grace, but leads on to a life of following Jesus, who saved him. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

# We must believe the Word purely

**< Mark 10:13-16 >**

**"Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them."**

## Jesus, who took the little children in His arms and blessed them

Dear fellow believers, this afternoon I preached that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, and that this is why we must believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. This evening, from verse 13 of the passage we read today, I want to share the word about how the Lord received and blessed those who are like little children—that is, the little children themselves. While Jesus was on this earth preaching the Word, people brought little children to Him, wanting Him to touch them. Jesus loved little children very much. But the disciples found them bothersome, rebuked the children loudly, and tried to keep them

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away. Then Jesus was greatly displeased and became angry. He asked why they were blocking the children like that, and He took the children in His arms, laid His hands on their heads, and prayed a blessing over them.

Why did He do so? Because the people of this world are not pure. When Jesus came to this earth and spoke, there were few pure people. Jesus loved little children, whose hearts are pure. It was because they had the purity that receives what is taught just as it is taught. So when the disciples blocked the children from coming to Jesus, He was indignant and asked angrily why they were stopping them. The Lord said that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, and that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. Then He took the little children in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.

## *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"*

Dear fellow believers, the Lord spoke like this in Matthew chapter 6. He said, *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Matthew 6:19)*, and He said, *"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:20)*. He said that what is laid up on earth is destroyed by moth and rust and disappears, but what is laid up in heaven does not disappear. We see that word being fulfilled exactly as it is.

These days a financial crisis has come upon the whole world, and those who laid up their wealth on earth have suffered enormous losses. Those who had multiplied great fortunes in stocks collapsed overnight as the value of their assets crumbled. People who held seventy billion or two hundred billion won in stocks have commonly lost tens of billions each this time. A man

who had thirty billion won kept barely three billion and lost all the rest. There are also quite a few who, under the name of Christianity, gathered the money of church members and piled up great wealth; they too had multiplied that wealth in stocks and lost greatly this time. As I said during the day, this is an age in which a man doing business with three billion won loses one and a half billion at a sitting.

But what we have invested in the gospel of the water and the Spirit has not disappeared. Because we invest all the material things we have in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, what we have invested does not vanish but remains as it is, and even now it keeps multiplying and increasing. They invested and multiplied and piled up money, and its value all fell and collapsed in the financial crisis, but what we have invested does not disappear. With our own eyes we see that the Lord's word that what is laid up in heaven does not disappear is the truth. This is both a comfort and a lesson to us.

How good it would be if we could diligently pile up wealth on this earth and hand it down to our descendants for ten thousand generations! But these days a rich man can be ruined overnight. Because they piled up their fortunes in stocks, they are maintained while the world is at peace, but once it collapses they become beggars in an instant. The needy sit and suffer losses, and those who piled up wealth watch their paper fortunes turn to waste paper in a moment. The world will not get better from now on either. It will improve a little and then just hold its ground; there will be no great boom as in the old days. Such crises will come once and come again, repeating themselves, until at last the Antichrist appears and the age of the pale horse comes.

When destruction comes upon this world, people will regret, saying they should have done this or that. Even the man who in

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past days brought many Jews out of the death camps and saved them repented too late that if he had sold the ring he wore and the car he drove, he could have saved a few more lives. Those who were holding on to their wealth regret that they did not save even one more life with it. We too have suffered many losses this time, but when we examined our accounts there was nothing to cut. The work of translating the gospel of the water and the Spirit, making books, and sending them out cannot be reduced.

What books do those who have received the remission of sin look at, and what do they consult, to frame their sermons? A born-again person consults the books that those who went before have made—the books that expound Galatians, the Gospel of John, and the four Gospels—drafts his sermon, and preaches himself. We must not underestimate what we have done as if it were nothing. So we have no choice but to keep translating the nurturing epistles, publishing them, and carrying on this work. To do that we must keep earning money, and for that we must challenge in faith. We must pray in faith and earn more to invest in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The harder the world becomes, the better people receive the books, and we pour even more strength into preaching the gospel. In fact, now that things have become harder than in the ninth month, the cost of translation and shipping has instead doubled, so the harder it gets, the more we set our hearts on preaching the gospel.

## Laying up wealth on earth is vain

Dear fellow believers, people think that if they invest much they will earn much money. But to invest, one must calculate well. For example, suppose someone wants to buy a house: the money he has is small, and he borrows the rest on a loan. If he

buys the house and resells it at once for a profit, money remains; but if he moves into that house and holds on to it for a long time, the calculation is entirely different.

If you own a house, high medical insurance premiums are charged and heavy taxes are levied. You must also pay the interest on the loan you took out. When you reckon it all up, you have only the one fact that it is your own house, while in reality you are in the red. What you earn is limited, and if you do not resell at once for a profit but drag it out, you become a debtor instead. Overnight you become a debtor and must live your whole life crushed under that debt. Unable to repay the principal, paying only the interest, you become a beggar. According to how one uses his head, he becomes a rich man or a beggar.

Dear fellow believers, does another person's house sell quickly? Other people are not fools either. For example, if there is information that a new subway or railroad to Seoul is being laid, people expect house prices to rise and buy apartments. But the seller also knows that information and sells at a price that already reckons in the rise. So the one who bought at the already-risen price must wait at least three or four years, even five, to make a proper profit, and while he keeps paying interest all that time he becomes a beggar. Losing two or three hundred million won happens overnight; it can vanish even in a few months. One wrong decision and that is what happens.

So in these difficult times, if you try to lay up wealth on earth by buying a house to make a profit, one misstep and you end up paying nothing but bank interest. I may sound as if I were giving a lecture on real estate, but my point in the end is this: do not lay up money on earth. We must receive the Word of God purely, like little children. When we live on this earth as God's workers, God does not let what we do be in vain. That God works through us is itself the blessing.

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## Those who believe purely receive blessing

Dear fellow believers, when a person receives the words of Jesus purely, he is saved. In the Bible there is the scene where a blind man's eyes are opened. He went to the pool of Siloam and washed as Jesus told him, and his eyes were opened. General Naaman, too, was told to go to the Jordan River and dip his body seven times, and when he dipped seven times just as he was told, his whole body became clean. It happened because they obeyed purely, just as the Lord commanded. Those who are pure before the Lord receive blessing. People who are like little children receive salvation, become children of God, and become His workers.

The people of the world are not pure. They twist their words this way and that to achieve their own ends, persuading the other person and making him accept what they say. What great deception that is! Jesus hates such things and loves what is pure. He is pleased with speaking purely and receiving purely. Even among Jesus' disciples there was one who was not pure, like Judas. Because the people of the world do not receive what is spoken simply, before them one must talk theology and explain this and that. But whoever comes before Jesus must be pure. It is the pure whom the Lord has blessed.

Dear fellow believers, it is the same with me. I too know nothing. With the little I have heard and the little I have seen in books, I cannot claim before the Lord to know anything. Because I knew that I was truly a person who knew nothing, and depended on the Lord, I received salvation, received and believed the Word of God, and am used even now. When the Lord told His disciples to untie the colt tied up in the village and bring it, and He rode that colt into Jerusalem, people spread their garments and branches on the road and praised Him. That is how

the Lord uses those who obey purely.

Dear fellow believers, if our hearts are pure we are used before God, and if we are not pure we are not used. God does not use a person whose heart is crooked. The Lord said, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3)*; He said, *"Blessed are those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4)*, *"Blessed are the merciful" (Matthew 5:7)*, and *"Blessed are the pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8)*. These are all words about the heart. The poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the pure—these receive the blessing. It is not that we fail to pile up wealth because we do not know how. It is not that we do not know how to buy and accumulate stocks and invest; it is because, even if we tried it, we would perish together when the world perishes, that we do not do it.

## Serving the Lord is not a loss

Dear fellow believers, the work of God is not something just anyone does. It is the person who believes purely in his heart and follows who does the work of God; the person full of his own fleshly thoughts, whose own calculations spin round and round, cannot do the work of God. Such a person ends up leaving the church and going out into the world—those who were in the church and went out into the world are all like that. They went out thinking how rich they would become if they went out and gathered up all the money, but those who went out that way are living instead as beggars. They calculated wrongly; they did not listen to the preaching purely. Their hearts were not pure.

Dear fellow believers, living in service of the Lord is never a loss. It looks like a loss even to oneself, but it is not. Whether one is old or young, if he lives for himself he falls into sin. Doing the works of sin costs a great deal of money, and he must earn it

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himself, so he lives his whole life as a slave. It is only because we serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we have no time and no leisure to spend on ourselves; if a person set out to live for himself for once and spend on himself, how much there would be to spend! Could you cover all that with the money you earn? It cannot be covered. It is because we do the work of God that we do not spend that money.

Dear fellow believers, serving the Lord is a blessing. If we serve the Lord, we stop doing useless things and are no longer bound to useless things. If we do not serve the Lord we must live for ourselves, and in living for oneself the spending has no end. It is not we who sacrifice; it is the Lord who sacrificed Himself for us and the Lord who has helped us. Since we must do something anyway as we live, He has shown us grace so that we may live doing righteous work. It looks as if we serve the Lord, but in fact we serve by the strength the Lord gives, so it is the Lord who serves us. Even so, the heart must be pure. We must be like little children. If one listens to the Word crookedly and twists it, he is ruined instead.

## Everything depends on where we offer ourselves

Dear fellow believers, everyone has his own thoughts. The Scripture says, *"to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6)*. The thoughts of the flesh follow one after another, and the thoughts of the Spirit follow in turn with thoughts of the Spirit, so their dimensions are entirely different. When we are saved, it is like a wooden stick stood upright: it is decided by which way it leans. Tilt it a little to the right and it falls that way; tilt it a little to the left and it falls that way.

The Holy Spirit is in us. Yet we have the flesh, and in that flesh are our own thoughts, stubbornness, and judgments. Everything depends on where we use this flesh and whose servant it becomes—on where we offer ourselves. If we tilt toward chasing the pleasures of our flesh, we fall completely over to that side; if we offer ourselves to the work of God, we are used entirely for the work of God. This applies only to those who have been saved. For the person who has not been saved, whatever he does this way or that is only sin. Therefore we must be pure. The word the Lord spoke, that the little children must not be forbidden to come to Him, is a word He speaks to us as well.

Dear fellow believers, as a person lives in this world, he keeps getting soiled. Even so, the heart must be pure, and we must gather up our hearts from time to time. Those who are called wise in this world only look wise; they are not truly wise. For what they toiled so hard to pile up on this earth crumbles overnight, is all broken, and disappears.

Dear fellow believers, even when the world collapses like this and everything is gloomy, what we do does not disappear. We have supported people with books so that they may stand by themselves in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. We supply books in large quantities so that people in Brazil, in South America, and in Europe may take these books, believe, preach the gospel themselves, hand out the books, and gather people. We have first established them so that they distribute the books, meet people, and have fellowship; so the work we do is not cut off but continues on. If we took on all that work ourselves one by one—sending each book and answering every letter that comes—the immediate news would be several times more than now. But if we did so, the day we end, they too would end. That is why, though it is a little harder, we make them stand on their

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own and support themselves. Souls are being saved, and even now the books travel around and people are receiving them.

Dear fellow believers, living in such a hard and difficult world, where everyone suffers, it is still most worthwhile that you and I live like this. It is because nothing is lost. What we have sown does not vanish in vain but remains as the salvation of souls.

Dear fellow believers, at this time when the dollar has soared and a financial crisis has broken out and the whole nation is said to have lost tens of trillions, what we do does not disappear—so it is exceedingly positive, and it is work that belongs to the truth. It is a great mercy that you and I serve the gospel of the water and the Spirit like this. If we had drawn in the people of the world, preached the gospel half-heartedly, collected money, and bought stocks ourselves, would we not have been ruined together with them? There are many who say they believe in Jesus, who say they preach the gospel, and yet spend their whole lives in vain. But we are not in vain. Not one day is in vain. Therefore what I want to say is this: we must be pure. Whether young person or brother or sister, whether elder member or worker, we must listen purely to the Word of God that the one who goes before delivers.

Dear fellow believers, if I led you with shallow tricks, would you follow me? Would you fail to understand what I say? You all know. If I did not live for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, how could you, who give your youth to live for the Lord, keep walking this road? This is the right road, the road of righteousness that has saved many people alive. It is the road that leads many to receive the remission of sin, return to God, be saved, and obtain eternal life. That is why the heart must be pure. We must chew over and ruminate on the Word we have heard, believe it, follow it, and do the work of God.

Dear fellow believers, though we seem ruined we are not ruined; what we do is profitable, and we can live lives that are not in vain—and that is good. God keeps us, is with us, and gives us many kinds of blessing, and that is truly good. I have finished the Word. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

# Eternal life for the one who sells his possessions and follows the Lord

**< Mark 10:17-31 >**

**"Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' So Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'' And he answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.' Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.' But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be**

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**saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.' Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'"**

How are you? It is good to see you. If we live today and live another day and so keep on living forever without dying, that is exactly eternal life. To live forever without dying—that is why it is called eternal life. And if, besides that, our bodies are never sick but healthy, and we enjoy much wealth and glory and can live well forever without any restraint, what a good blessing that would be! Now God has said that He will give exactly such blessings to those who live by faith. Just as He said He would give the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit and give this earth to the meek in heart, God gives land and gives blessings to those who live obeying as He is pleased, and I believe He will give all such things too when the time comes.

## *"What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"*

Looking at today's passage: while Jesus was on this earth, as He was passing through a certain town, one man came running in haste. And he knelt down and asked Jesus, *"Good Teacher,*

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*what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"* This man threw at Jesus, as a question, the greatest task that human life must solve. What on earth must a person do to live well forever without dying? He asked something truly great, so this man can be called a man of a very high level.

Ordinary people do not ask such things; they ask how they can earn a lot of money, or how they can make another person's money entirely their own without laying a hand on it. But this man came to Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life—that is, what he must do to live forever. Then Jesus said, *"You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"* When Jesus spoke first of these five commandments of the Ten Commandments, the man answered, *"Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth"*—I am a man who has kept these commandments perfectly.

Then Jesus looked at this man, loved him, and said, *"One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."* But because this man had great possessions, at this word he became sad, his face darkened, and he went away from Jesus sorrowing.

## *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"*

Jesus looked around at His disciples and gave them an object lesson. When He said that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God, the disciples were startled at

His word. Does this mean that the rich cannot enter the kingdom of heaven? Does it mean that those who have money, those with many possessions, are cursed? Of course Jesus did not mean it that way. Jesus was simply explaining with a figure how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, saying that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

The disciples were greatly astonished at this word, and a debate arose among them, saying to one another who then could be saved. For it was a word that the rich absolutely cannot enter the kingdom of God by their own strength. Then Jesus looked at them and said: with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible. By man's strength it is utterly impossible, but God is fully able to accomplish that work.

## If material things become one's god

Dear fellow believers, being rich refers both to the rich in heart and to those actually rich in material things. The Lord spoke of these commandments here, but in fact, even if one kept all the commandments, if material things become his god, his deity, he cannot believe in God. Looking at people: one person has many material things yet does not regard them as everything; another thinks of material things only as something to use according to his need; and another thinks nothing is impossible if only he has material things, and serves them as his god. But material things are only material things; they are never a true deity, and they are not God.

What happens if one pursues material things too much, chases them and follows them? Because he follows material things, he cannot believe in God, cannot follow God, and cannot

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trust God, and in the end he becomes like that rich young man. If a man sets material things up as his god and follows only material things, how can he follow God? Just as we cannot serve two masters, God gives us material things too and gives us all the best things, so we should enjoy and use them according to the needs of our lives; material things can never be more precious than people, and never more precious than God. But if material things come to feel more precious than people and more precious than God, that person as a result cannot enter the kingdom of heaven; with his lips he says he believes the salvation God gives, but that salvation fails to enter into his heart, and in the end he goes to hell.

Think about applying it practically. If someone has made material things—money—his god, can he believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God gives and follow the will of God? He cannot follow. That is why our Lord put these words in the Scriptures. Then again, who among you and me is there that does not like material things, that does not like money?

## Money is necessary, but it is not God

In fact, money is a very good thing according to need. Only with money can one do good and kind deeds; without money one can do neither good deeds nor kind deeds, and though he wishes to help someone he cannot. As people live they attend weddings and various family occasions, and before I believed in Jesus, at a very young age, I saw that people disliked it when someone came to such places empty-handed. And so at a very young age I realized: ah, without money one cannot properly play one's part as a human being. Even if a person wants to live uprightly and do kind deeds as he lives, without money, though the heart

is willing, he cannot do so and receives no recognition from others. The sorrow that comes from having no money is enormous, and its pain is enormous too—more than words can tell.

But what I came to know as I grew older is the fact that money is necessary to people, but money is not higher than people. Money is needed according to the needs of living; money is neither higher than man nor is it God. Money does not bring a dead man to life, nor does it give peace to the heart. People think that if only they have money they will be at ease, but it is absolutely not so; the peace of the heart is given only by Jesus. But that rich young man had many possessions, so at the word to sell all that wealth, give it to the poor, and follow Him, he went back sorrowing. He seemed to believe in God well, but because in the end he had made money his deity, his god, that man was ruined and went to hell.

The human heart is like that by nature. When a person looks at another's goods in the market he says they are not so good, but when he pays his money, buys them, and brings them home, those goods look so good to him. The Scriptures also say that before buying one says it is bad, and after buying he boasts—when a thing becomes one's own it all looks good, and when it is not one's own its faults show. Such is the human heart. If the heart is bound to one's own possessions like that, wealth becomes one's god, and like that rich young man one comes to leave the Lord.

## Those who left everything and followed the Lord

Dear fellow believers, if we want to obtain eternal life—that is, to receive the remission of sin, receive all the blessings God

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gives, and live well forever—we need only believe in God. The remission of sin God gives also comes by faith, and after we believe and are born again, when we acknowledge God as God and obey and follow His will, all those blessings come upon us in their season. So Jesus' disciples, hearing that word, confessed: See, we have left all and followed You. Peter had been a fisherman casting nets, but he left his nets, left his house and his hometown all behind, and followed Jesus; James and John, too, were men who left their father Zebedee in the boat and followed Him.

So Jesus said that whoever has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for His sake and the gospel's will receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands—with persecutions, and that there is no one who will not receive eternal life in the age to come. At first it seems that one has lost much, but whoever quickly realizes that material things are not everything, and knows and believes and follows the Lord as the God who also gives material things, receives a hundredfold reward even while he lives, and obtains eternal life in the age to come as well. But He said that many who are first will be last and the last first: it is not being first to believe that counts, but the one who realizes that material things are not everything and truly follows the Lord reaches this blessing.

Not one word of the Lord's saying here, that they receive persecutions along with it, can be empty. There is no one who follows the Lord without receiving persecution. One sister lives separated, in a room she rented alone, because her husband demands a divorce on the ground that she attends church—but that is precisely the course of following the Lord and receiving persecutions along with it. Then would I not receive persecution? There is no one who escapes persecution. I too have actually

gone through so much persecution all this time that you would be astonished if I told it all; yet since the Word of God says so, I followed the Lord even while going through it. In our work as well, there was a time when we had to tear down overnight what we had labored to build and withdraw, but that too was a persecution received along the way of following the Lord.

## Those who deny themselves and follow the Lord

Dear fellow believers, whoever follows material things is ruined, and whoever follows God prospers. He fares well. People know this well, yet because they adapt themselves to reality and do not think deeply, before they know it material things and money become their god, and they think they can live if only they have money. Such people cannot lead a proper life of faith, and even if they do lead a life of faith, they do not truly believe in and follow God. Therefore such a person not only fails to receive blessing but also fails to obtain eternal life; he says he believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, but he does not truly believe. When God is not his God, however much he says he believes, it is of no use. However well he knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit and however well he preaches, God looks at the center of the heart—how could He save one who regards God as less than money

This does not apply to some people and not to others; it applies to everyone. It applies to me too: if I regarded money as God and followed it, that would be the end. We preach the Word of God every day—how can we preach? It is because we acknowledge and believe God as God that we can preach and can follow. If, after being saved, one thinks God is unnecessary and money is supreme, the Word of God never enters that heart.

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So we must not think lightly of the Lord, as if we did Him a favor by believing once, and after believing may just pocket the gifts and chase other things. We are those for whom it would not be enough to serve the Lord forever and follow Him forever, and there is nothing to lose by following Him. He is the One who surely keeps what He has promised us. Money—even if it becomes not a hundred billion but trillions and quadrillions—is nothing. Money is just money, needed according to need, nothing more and nothing less; but God is forever exalted, the One who governs all things, so He is entirely different.

There are so many foolish people in the world. For one person a billion won is his god; for another two billion is his god; for another ten billion, and for yet another a hundred million. But can a few hundred million won protect you? When it disappears, is that person not nothing? Money is never something to hold on to and depend on.

That is why it does not matter to me. I believe that the Lord gives me material things, and when my heart desires, He gives everything. I believe that if it is truly needed for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, God gives even enormous material things, and He actually gives them. I also think about this: if God gave much money when faith is not yet ready, many would touch a little of it, grow proud, and quit the life of faith. God knows all that, and He wants first to grow our faith, small as a millet seed; so I simply ask God according to need. When I tell Him, "God, a house is needed; land is needed," God is the One who fulfills and supplies all according to the desire of our hearts.

When I see a piece of land or a house that pleases my heart, I ask God to give it to me. Then before long I experience that it has actually become mine. I am not making this up: when I ask according to need, God actually gives. But what is obtained that way is not what is great; the God who supplies it is great. God is

our everything and the One who fulfills all the desires of our hearts, and people know this far too little.

This rich man had property, and that material wealth had already become a deity, a god to him; that is why Jesus told him to sell it all, give it away, and follow Him. Then do you and I have anything to sell and give away? Perhaps because we have nothing to give away, it is easier for us to deny ourselves and easier to follow the Lord. But if you had five billion won in property and the Lord told you to sell it all, give it to the poor, and follow Him, how many would follow? That is why those who will enter the kingdom of heaven are not many.

In reality, even without saying it to us directly like that, the Lord says the same thing to us. If we would follow the Lord, we must deny ourselves, deny our own thoughts, deny our stubbornness and our will. And we must bear the hardships and persecutions that come because of the Lord. When, even in the midst of that, we say that You alone are my God and I will follow Your will, then He truly gives eternal life. So although they say there are many believers on this earth, those who reach the goal properly are not many.

Dear fellow believers, be thankful rather that you have no money. If you have money hidden away, there are many who cannot obey when the Lord says to offer it all and follow Him. The men of old also said to regard gold as stone, but where is the person who can look at diamonds as stones, and where is the person who can regard money as nothing? Yet whoever knows God and Christ regards money as nothing. Money is there and then not there, not there and then there, and it comes when needed; so it is with land, and so it is with everything on this earth—but God is not like that.

This word teaches us how much we must deny our own thoughts and treasure God most of all in order to follow and

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believe in the Lord by faith, to obtain eternal life, and to receive the remission of sin. True happiness comes when we acknowledge God as God and follow Him. I believe you know this well.

Since I did not have much property, I could simply skip the course of selling it all, giving it away, and then following the Lord. Having nothing, I cannot tell you how comfortable it is to follow the Lord. If I had had much property, when He said to sell it all, give it away, and follow Me, I might have become someone who went back sorrowing like that rich man. But thankfully, because I had no money, I could follow; and living the life of faith like this, I have come to think that money is just something to have according to need—nothing special.

If He had told me to sell everything, give it away, and follow when I had no faith yet, I truly could not have done so—so what a relief it is that there was nothing great to sell and give away before following! So be thankful to God, and thankful to your parents, rather, for having no money. Do not complain, asking what your parents ever handed down to you. If you had had several billion won in your present state, many of you would have quit the life of faith; thinking of that, it is something to be exceedingly thankful for. Is that not so? It is so—truly a thing to be thankful for. Thinking of such things, who could fail to give thanks?

After meeting the Lord we must live by faith and become rich with what the Lord gives. Yet where is the rich man among us? Because we spend all we have for the gospel of the water and the Spirit, there is no money to pile up. So when we pray daily the Lord fills us again, and as soon as He fills us, within a month we spend it all—money comes in and goes right out. Do you know how good that is? If you hold even a million won, useless thoughts keep rising—what shall I do with this?—but

when it comes in and goes right out, no such thoughts arise and there is no worry, and I cannot tell you how comfortable that is. I give thanks to God, who fills our needs according to need. I have finished the Word. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

# The blessing of receiving a hundredfold, with persecutions

**< Mark 10:23-31 >**

**"Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' But Jesus looked at them and said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.' Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'"**

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## The reason it is hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God

You are going through much in this sweltering heat, so today I intend to preach very briefly. Looking at the word we read today, Jesus told His disciples that it is hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. How hard is it? He said that it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. It is the word that the rich of this world cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. So the disciples were startled. Then are the rich excluded from the kingdom of heaven? Where is there such unfairness? they asked. When they asked who then could be saved, Jesus said that with men it is impossible, but with God it is possible.

The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God. He said that those with much earthly wealth cannot enter that kingdom of God. This word means that if a person sets his heart on the earth, on his property, and only on this visible world, his soul cannot enter the kingdom of God. Man is a being made in the image of God: he has not only a body but a soul. God formed man and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and that breath is the living spirit. That is why man is said to resemble the image of God. Just as God lives forever, not man's body but the spirit within him also lives forever. But if that spirit, while meaning to go and live in the kingdom of heaven, inclines its heart only to this visible world and sets its greed only here, it loses its interest in the kingdom of God; so He said it is as impossible as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

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## With men it is impossible, but God does it

But as He said that with men it is impossible but with God it is possible, our Lord took upon Himself all our sins—all the sins of mankind—with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and received in our place the judgment for all those sins, and so He has saved us. Rich or poor, for whoever does not set his heart only on this world but sets his heart on the kingdom of God and the truth, with his interest on his own soul and on God, the Lord—by the salvation He accomplished in coming to this earth, receiving baptism, and dying on the Cross—has remitted all his sins, washed them all away, and saved him completely. He has made him enter the kingdom of God by believing in that gospel of the water and the Spirit.

## The world of religion is money, but the Lord's word is the world of the spirit

In fact, the Word of God is not the fleshly word of this world. Yet people, while believing in God, while coming to church, while claiming to do the work of God, are interested only in visible wealth. That is why they are ignorant of the kingdom of God. Here also lies the reason that what church officers or famous people say becomes religion. Interested only in visible objects, they speak as if one believes in Jesus and goes to heaven but must give much money to be saved. That is only talk for extracting the material things of the world.

Religion is man making some god for himself, asking that god for blessings, and trying to live well by getting material things through that god. In the end, the conclusion of the world of religion is all money and material things. They say that since

the rich can hardly enter the kingdom of God, one should offer much material wealth before God and pile up rewards; they say one must give this much to go to heaven. Whoever gives much money that way receives offices and honors too. Buddhism also performs hundred-day prayers and thousand-day prayers under all kinds of names, but its conclusion is money; and within Christianity as well, people open the Bible and yet the conclusion flows toward bringing money.

But what our Lord spoke of is not that. It is the world of the spirit. He was saying that the person who sets his interest only on material things, depends only on material things as he lives, and tries to go to the kingdom of heaven by offering those material things to God, can never go. The One who brings us to the kingdom of heaven is God. What did God do? *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16)*. God the Father sent His Son to this earth; John the Baptist passed all the sins of this world on to Jesus through baptism; that Jesus bore all the sins of mankind, died on the Cross, and rose again in three days, and so saved all us mankind from sin. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and this is what God has done. So we go to the kingdom of heaven by receiving, through faith, that salvation by which Jesus Christ came to this earth, was baptized, died on the Cross, and rose from the dead, and so removed all our sins.

## Peter, who left everything and followed the Lord

The disciples of Jesus asked again like this. Verse 28 says, *"Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You'" (Mark 10:28)*. Did Peter leave everything to

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follow Jesus, or did he not? Peter's original occupation was fisherman, a man of the sea. His work was mending and washing nets, letting them down where fish were plentiful, hauling them up, and selling the catch to make a living. But a fisherman's work cannot be done alone; a big net must be pulled up by many people joining strength. In the village where Peter lived, his whole household was together.

Then Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw Peter and said, Follow Me, and I will make you become a fisher of men. At that one word Peter left his nets, left his house and family behind, and followed the Lord. So Peter said boldly: we have left everything for the Lord. It seems he asked this expecting that Jesus would say, You will enter the kingdom of heaven.

## The one who follows the Lord

Jesus said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life."* He said that whoever has left house or brothers or sisters or parents or children or lands for Him and the gospel receives a hundredfold in this world, receives persecutions along with it, and receives eternal life in the age to come. This connects directly with that word that it is harder for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle.

It is the truth that our Lord came to this earth, received baptism, and died on the Cross, and so made us without sin.

Whatever sin you have committed, through that baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist when He came to this earth, all your sins passed over onto Jesus' body. My sins and yours all passed over. Therefore there is no one who cannot receive the remission of sin by believing in that Jesus. Because Jesus has already removed all the sins of this world, even all the sins we commit throughout our whole lives, there is no one who cannot be saved by believing in Jesus' baptism and the blood of the Cross. The word that with men it is impossible but God can do it lies exactly here.

Now Jesus showed concretely what that wealth He spoke of is. Brothers and sisters—the members of one's household; father and mother and children—one's family; and lands—the business by which one lives. Whoever leaves such things and follows the Lord receives a hundredfold even in this present age and receives eternal life besides. Then what persecutions are there in believing in and following the Lord? Here He said they receive persecutions along with it. Whoever leaves the wealth that you and I cannot do without—his own flesh and blood and family—and follows the Lord obtains eternal life, receives persecutions along with it, and receives blessing: that is what He said.

In fact, we must believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sin, but when we would believe that truth—that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism, died on the Cross, and rose again and saved us—there are times we must pay a price. There are times one must leave his whole family, and times one loses the possessions he has. To believe this truth of salvation one must bear even this much loss, and to follow the Lord one must bear all these things—that is the word.

In one household people believe in Jesus and also in other things, and they scatter to this church and that church, this

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denomination and that denomination. Now this word of the truth of the water and the Spirit is right; but if one's wife or parents or children or business are all bound to the religions of the world, when he tries to come out following this truth, they drive him out of the house. If you are going to believe that, they say, do not enter this house—let us cut all ties. So among those going to the kingdom of heaven there are many who at first lose the things of the world. There are many who lose their fleshly parents and brothers and sisters and relatives and money. Holding on to these things, one cannot believe and follow. Because they oppose, they keep him from believing, keeping, preaching, and living this gospel.

Therefore, to believe this truth—the truth of salvation by which Jesus came to this earth and saved us with His baptism and the blood of the Cross—one must believe while losing all these things and bearing it; only so is one saved. Only so does one obtain eternal life. Only when this comes first does one become the person who holds to and believes the truth of salvation even though he loses the things of the world; and to the one who has borne it, God gives a hundredfold more blessing even in this present world. When we lose one, the Lord repays with a hundred. Even if one has lost his fleshly brothers and sisters and his ties with his earthly family are cut, he enters into Christ and a new family is formed, and that new family and those new things become a hundredfold recompense. This is truly the truth.

Peter left his own family to follow Jesus, but in their place he gained you and me as brothers. You are Peter's brothers and sisters. The family of the kingdom of God and the family on this earth are different. Whoever cannot hold to and believe the truth of salvation because of the material things of the world, the family of the world, and concern for saving face—for him it is

harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. The words of Jesus are spiritual words and at the same time literally true in the flesh; do not try to reinterpret and re-edit them to unravel them into another meaning. Look up the original text and it is exact as it stands. Rather than growing heated in criticizing others and exposing their faults, it is right to speak the truth.

It is only natural that there are things we lose in believing in the Lord, receiving the remission of sin, and following Him. Even within one family, those who believe and follow this truth of salvation and those who do not become enemies to each other. The one who has received the remission of sin and the one who has not, the one who follows this truth and the one who does not, are enemies to each other. Then what happens? Those who follow the truth become the people of the kingdom of God and live bound together within it, and those who do not gather and live among themselves—so we lose them in that way.

Dear fellow believers, do not regard lightly the fact that you have received the remission of sin and obtained eternal life. However much one has believed, if he stays bound to his family while they oppose the truth, he loses eternal life. This is not a word to kick one's family away. It means that one must first believe in and follow the Lord, parting for a while only in order to follow the truth; one must not let those who have not received the remission of sin spoil his holding to and following the truth. If he stays bound there, he keeps rationalizing, and in the end he lives as he pleases within untruth, saying whatever seems good is good. Following the visible flesh, fitting in only with family and human affection, he ends up rejecting the truth. Such a person neither obtains eternal life nor follows the Lord.

But whoever would gain both salvation and eternal life must first hold to and follow the truth, even if he loses the visible

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wealth of this present world. And after he has first followed and his faith has been firmly established, he must not abandon his remaining family either, but preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to them and lead them all to come into salvation, into the truth. It is in order to do this that one receives persecutions along with it. What is persecution? Being hated, sometimes being beaten, being threatened, being robbed, being despised—all these are persecution.

People say: that person was quite decent before he believed in Jesus, before he attended that church, but since attending that church he cares only for the church, and the moment he finishes a meal he goes out preaching the gospel; he used to be warm-hearted, but now his warmth has dried up. This is how we are persecuted. But we receive a hundredfold along with persecutions, and along with persecutions we also save souls. And the last thing we obtain is eternal life. Eternal life is living forever—life lived forever in completeness without any imperfection, in joy and fullness. What those who have received the remission of sin finally obtain is this eternal life, living in everlasting delight in the kingdom of God.

The Word of Scripture says that whoever would live will die, and whoever would die will live. Because of the Lord, because of the truth, we receive persecution and are despised; though we would fulfill every human duty, when we try to follow the truth, people weep and family weep. The truth is clearly right, yet when we try to follow it our family weeps. How could you do this, they say; since you believed in Jesus, brotherly affection has hit bottom. This is how we are persecuted.

Dear fellow believers, what happens if, though persecuted, you follow the truth? You save your own family as well. It is not abandoning the family. When did God, who is rich in love, ever tell us to abandon our family? If we first believe the salvation

and follow the truth—following the Lord even under persecution—we gain a hundredfold new family in Christ and gain lands. What are the lands? A workplace where we can do the work of God. A workplace within this church where we can do the work of God to our hearts' content. In that workplace we arm ourselves fully, lead our own family members who have not yet been saved to salvation, and bring not only our family but others also to receive the remission of sin. Thus we gain a hundredfold of lands: our range of activity widens that much, and we receive many blessings in both spirit and body. Therefore we must receive persecution in faith and not fear receiving the remission of sin and following the Lord.

## The first and the last

Our Lord also said, But many who are first will be last, and the last first. This word means that even if one has received the remission of sin, the person who cannot break free—bound by human affection in the midst of unsaved family—is last, however long he has believed. But the one who, though saved only recently, believes and follows this word of truth becomes first. Who is the one who is first? Those who believe the Lord's word purely and believe the truth of salvation, who live by faith in union with the church, who widen their range of activity by faith and begin a new life by faith—these are the first, the seniors, the elder brothers and sisters.

You who have newly received the remission of sin—do you want to overtake those who came first and take the lead? It is simple. Do not be bound by human affection; believe the Word of God and follow it in faith, and you will overtake them at once. Those who do not lean toward wealth but believe the salvation

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the Lord has given have obtained eternal life, and with persecutions they have gained God's workplace. Those who receive the remission of sin, come in purely, grow up in faith within the church, and receive God's blessing even while living on this earth—we must keep in mind that they were persecuted first. We must not fear persecution. When we are persecuted, it is frightening and hard; but if we are persecuted for God's gospel of the water and the Spirit, for uniting for the Lord's sake, we should gladly receive it in faith, thinking: God is doing this to give us a hundredfold blessing.

Dear fellow believers, if you want to receive a hundredfold blessing, you must follow the truth. Those who have received the remission of sin must receive blessing. We must receive the blessing of eternal life, and while we live on this earth we must also receive the blessing of material things and the blessing of family. Who are my brothers and sisters and mother? You and I, who follow the will of the Lord, are one another's family and parents and brothers and sisters and mother. For you also, the members within the church are your brothers and sisters and mother, your own family. Do you believe? This very place is your workplace, and this place where we live by the law of faith is the place where you can receive a hundredfold blessing. Such is the law within this world. I pray that God will give you these blessings, and also give you faith—faith that can endure persecutions well along the way, faith that can follow in faith. I have finished the Word. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

# We must know how to give things up for the Lord

**< Mark 10:28-31 >**

**"Then Peter began to say to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You.' So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'"**

## Peter, who left everything and followed the Lord

This afternoon we shared the word that with men it is impossible, but with God it is possible. God has accomplished my salvation and yours, and He prepared that salvation for us. Know that we obtain salvation by believing this fact. This evening, following the word that the rich cannot enter the kingdom of God, Peter asked Jesus like this: we have left everything and followed You. With Peter it was in fact so. He left everything and followed the Lord. So indeed, we have truly left everything.

Then the Lord took up those words and said, "*So Jesus answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who*

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*has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.'"* Yes—He said that whoever has left house or brothers or sisters or parents or children or lands for Him and this gospel receives a hundredfold in this present age. Whoever has left much receives as much as he left—no, a hundredfold beyond it. Only, he receives it with persecutions, and in the age to come there is no one who will not obtain eternal life, He said. So we must ask ourselves: have we left everything? Are we those who leave? Whether you and I have left or not yet may differ greatly from person to person.

## There are times we must give things up to follow the Lord

As we meet the Lord and follow Him, there come times when you and I are placed where we must give things up. Even when I did not know this word, there was much I had to give up when I tried to believe in and follow the Lord. What must be given up? If parents hinder and block us from believing in and following our Jesus, we have no choice but to leave even our parents; if a child keeps us from believing in Jesus and from serving Him, we can only give that up too. If brothers or sisters of the same household, or mother and father, hinder us from believing in and following the Lord, we can only give them up as well. And if, because of property, they keep us from serving the Lord—if holding on to an inheritance keeps us from following the Lord—then the property too must be given up. The lands mean fields

and paddies; He said that whoever has given up even such things receives in this present world a reward of a hundredfold and more, but always receives persecutions along with it. It has truly been so.

To give up here does not mean neglecting one's parents to death or becoming enemies. The Lord is the One who looks at the center of the heart and judges. It means that because they keep us from following the Lord, we can only part even for a while and live aching in heart. Giving something up is not a matter of making enemies. The heart aches, but because they keep us from following the Lord, we cannot be together—that is all. Those who have gone through such things receive many persecutions in this world along with it and become workers of God, and so they also receive much recompense before God. And even if there were no recompense, we follow the Lord. If there are those who hinder us from following the Lord, our position is that we cannot be with them. That is why we must live this way—but in truth the heart aches. Go through it and it is truly hard. Very hard. Truly very hard.

Have you also gone through many such things? Some of you have, and some of you will, I believe. Many of you must already have gone through them. I too went through much even before I knew this word. In the old days I had a great many friends and got along well with them, but when I believed in the Lord and preached, served, and followed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, I could not be together with them. They abandoned me, and in fact I abandoned them too; unable to go on together, it turned out that way against my intent. Those who know me know roughly: my birth parents died when I had grown to a certain age, and I had a foster mother, and she too greatly disliked my serving and following the gospel. So, against my intent, I lived apart. She said she would give me property, would

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do this and that for me, but I said no—I must follow the Lord, so no. If she had guaranteed that I could stay and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, I would have done so; but to spread word that the gospel I preach is wrong, that it is heresy, while telling me to stay by her side, was like holding me with property as bait, so I refused.

Someone even sneered at me, saying, "Are you Luther?" I am not Luther, but I thought: if Luther also followed for the Lord's sake, then I can follow like him. There is also in the world an ideology that says that since Jesus came to this earth and saved, healed, and liberated the poor, the sick, and the oppressed, we today must do the same—interpreting salvation as fleshly liberation. But we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, saving people from sin and rescuing oppressed souls. They say they save the oppressed and try to do it in the flesh; we do it in the spirit—so great is the difference between those ways of thinking.

## The recompense given to those who have lost much

In fact, on the way of following the Lord, if anyone in the household opposes, we cannot be together. We bear with them and wait; but if they say, believe anything else, only do not attend that church—preach the gospel of the Cross if you will, but never preach or believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit—then we can only part. But the Lord recompenses exactly according to this word. Serving the gospel of the water and the Spirit together with you now, I believe that God gives us much recompense just as it is written in this word. Though what we do is nothing great, the Lord blesses us so that we receive blessing in this many areas. This is by no means because we are worthy.

As we follow the Lord, when would we ever say that we have received so much persecution and given up so much for Him? We only did so because we could not help it in order to follow the Lord. I know that is all we can say. But the Lord does not see it that way; He says, You received much persecution for Me and lost much, did you not? I will recompense you richly. So the one who has lost much for the Lord, the one who has lost much because of the Lord, receives much. He receives even in this present world. If you think, I did only a little and yet lost much—why does He not repay me?—you must examine whether in the Lord's sight you are still short. Something must yet ripen; you must pass in the Lord's sight. And in fact, even if I have done a little, it is not worth calling anything done.

Have you ever been shunned like this by many around you? Only the one who has heard even from his own mother, You are a heretic, knows that pain. No one knows it who has not gone through it. When a very close person does that, the heart aches badly and it is hard. Have you ever lost much property because of the Lord? Ever lost honor? Ever been persecuted? The Lord does not command that it must be so by force. If one forces himself, saying he must do so to receive blessing, he is not recognized. But if we want to follow the Lord, it can only be so: we can only lose much and can only give up much. And yet the Lord says He will recompense—we can only be thankful.

Even if He did not recompense, we ought to follow the Lord; yet He says He will recompense, so we are thankful. Because those who went before lost so much and followed the Lord, they now receive much recompense—how thankful we are! Is it so, or is it not? It is truly so. If you follow the Lord and are persecuted for His sake, I do not say that I will recompense you. If you truly do so in faith, I think and believe: the Lord will recompense and bless this person. And I pray that the Lord will

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bless you. What I could give would be next to nothing, but the Lord can give until the day He comes, and that is far better. All I can give is to share a little food and speak gently. When you are truly in pain, what can I do for you? I cannot. But our Lord has power and can do it. That is the difference. So each of us should think over how it has been with me, and how it has been with you.

## The first and the last

Peter said, we have left everything and followed You; but leaving is not everything. Following the Lord is what matters. Walking after the Lord is what is important. Peter had to be martyred in his day—in those times one had to be martyred—but in this age, if we live for the Lord, we receive recompense as well. So I know the standard is how much you have followed the Lord. He says we receive even eternal life—living forever—so is that not a truly excellent thing?

Here in verse 31 the Lord says something that seems opposed to what went before: *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first" (Mark 10:31)*. However long one has believed in Jesus, those who have truly lived like this to follow the Lord may be few—that is the meaning. It can be so among those who believed first, and many who are last will become first. Who is the one who goes before? The one who has followed for the Lord, according to the Lord's will, believing the Word just as it is—he is the one who goes before. Not the one whose years of faith are merely long, but the one who has actually lived like this for the Lord is the one who goes before. This is exactly what the Lord was saying.

So everyone believes in Jesus, yet there are those who,

having only just come to know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, follow well according to the Word, and there are those who, though they have believed a long time, fail to follow according to the Word. That is precisely the first and the last in the spiritual order of which the Lord speaks. Even within our fellowship, was there not a case where someone lorded it over others as one who was first, and then did wrong and went out? The first becoming last and the last first—this is that word. So no one knows. Even such a person may repent and believe at the point of death; we cannot know. This word is truly weighty with meaning, a matter to think over deeply.

I do not exhort you, saying: live like this. I am saying that the Word is so. The rest you must apply to yourselves: the Word being so, how is it really with me, and how then shall I live? You must decide. Real life of faith is like that. The Word being so, what shall we do—that is what matters; it is not doing something because the pastor says to do it. I too, before this word, think over the years gone by and the present, and look back on how many blessings the Lord has given. In the old days I lost many people, was ill-treated, and heard myself called a heretic. Even now abroad they call me a heretic, but now I rather think of it with pride.

In the old days I was so persecuted as a heretic that at times indignation surged up; but I could not come to blows, and simply being beaten would be shameful, so I considered it best to say: you publish books, and I will publish books, and let us compare objectively. Is that not why we are doing literature ministry? At times it is very hard, but when I think it over, I am truly thankful.

Living in this world, I consider how many blessings the Lord gives, and I am thankful. Our family of saints also live well in faith. Since the goal we run toward the Lord is the same and our purpose is the same, all the rest is secondary, mere side branches.

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So we joke with one another, laugh together, and pass the time pleasantly. We know one another well, we have faith, and the goal we believe and follow is the same and the direction the same; that is why we talk like this, joke like this, and live together. But if we did that out in the world, we would be treated as strange people, as mad people. Within our own circle we are not treated as mad; we can laugh together—this is the blessing given to us.

I see our family of saints poking one another in the side, playing pranks, and yet feeling good and laughing together as they live. If we did that to a passerby out in the world, they would call us mad; but since the goal we run toward the Lord is the same and the purpose is the same, all the rest is just secondary side branches. That is why a joke told to laugh together is enjoyable. Watching our saints play with one another like this, I am reminded of the Scripture that says the little child shall roll about with the lion, and shall put his hand in the viper's den and not be bitten—that the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom without evil. Is this church not such a church? Even the strong do not crush the weak but sometimes let themselves lose; even when they press someone down, they press only so far as not to hurt and then let go—dear fellow believers, this is paradise on earth. I know the church of God to be so. It is a truly thankful thing. There are many who will receive blessing before God.

Truly, I am thankful. There are many who will receive blessing before God, and I pray that God will bless them. By all means live by faith, and until the Lord comes, follow the Lord, receive blessing, and live. I pray that God will give you such faith and blessing, and that He will give such faith and blessing to the churches across the nation. I have finished the Word. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

# From “What shall I do” to “With God”

**< Mark 10:17-27 >**

**“Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’’ And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, ‘How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, ‘Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are**

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**possible.'"**

## The man who came running and knelt, yet still held on to his own works

A man came running to Jesus. He knelt down before Jesus as He was going on His way. He was not an indifferent man, nor a man who took eternal life lightly. In the act of running there is urgency, and in the kneeling posture there is respect. But the question that came out of his mouth revealed where his heart was leaning. *"Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17)* He wanted eternal life, but he thought of eternal life as wages for what a man has done. He supposed that if he did one thing more, if he cleared one more level, he could obtain eternal life.

People ask this question very naturally. They ask how good I must live, how much I must volunteer, how great a thing I must give up, how long I must pray. They all look like serious questions. But at the center of those questions there still stands *"I."* One sees the self that would achieve salvation as larger than the God who accomplishes salvation. Even religious zeal can be made into material for building one's own righteousness. This does not mean that running and kneeling were wrong. It means that even within so humble-looking a posture, the heart that depends on its own works can remain intact.

The man called Jesus Good Teacher. Jesus asked why he called Him good, and said that no one is good but God alone. The Lord was not simply correcting the etiquette of an address. He set the standard of the 'goodness' the man spoke of before God. Compared among men, he would have looked like quite a good man. He could well pride himself on being more sincere

and self-controlled than others and on having kept the commandments. But before the standard that God alone is good, comparative advantage cannot become righteousness. For there is no one who has reached the same goodness as God.

When we grow used to people's praise, we easily forget God's standard. We can say that we have not broken the law, have done no great harm to others, have cared for our family, and have taken part in the work of the church. Such things are precious and proper. But they are not the price of the remission of sin. Living responsibly before one's neighbors and having one's sins removed before God are not the same problem. A good life is precious, but a good life does not save a person from the judgment of his own sins. Jesus did not despise this man's seriousness, yet He exposed the wrong foundation hidden within that seriousness.

## The commandments do not praise self-righteousness but expose the master of the heart

Jesus spoke the commandments to him. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your parents. Then he answered that he had kept them all from his youth. In this answer not the least hesitation appears. Rather than receiving the commandments as light that shines into his heart, he used them as a list proving how well he had lived. Hearing the commandments, he did not discover sin; he held out his report card.

The passage says that Jesus looked at him and loved him. The Lord's next word was not a harsh test thrown at him out of hatred. It was a word that, loving the man locked in his self-righteousness, revealed the limit he could not see. The Lord said

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that he lacked one thing, and told him to sell what he had, give to the poor, and come and follow Him. At that word, sadness appeared on the face of the man who had answered so confidently. He had great possessions, and in the end he went away sorrowing.

We must not read this as though the Lord here established a new law that everyone must dispose of all his property to obtain eternal life. If the act of giving up all possessions were the price of salvation, salvation would again become a price paid by man. What the passage reveals is not another form of salvation by works but the scene in which this man's self-assurance collapses. He thought he had kept all the commandments, but when the Lord's word touched his most precious place, he could go no further. Not because wealth itself is sin, but because that wealth had become the master holding his security, his worth, and his future.

Money is needed for living. Material things are used in caring for one's family, enjoying the fruit of honest labor, helping people in hardship, and serving the gospel. The passage of Scripture does not say that the poor are saved automatically and the rich are cast off automatically. The problem is not the amount of what one owns but the resting place of the heart. One can gaze only at money while having little, and one can have much and use it rightly, knowing it as what God has entrusted. But to this man, wealth was something he could not let go of more than the Lord's call. It was not only that his hands gripped his wealth; his wealth gripped his heart.

The commandments do not ask only about the reputation we have kept up before people. They ask what we love and depend on more than God. Honor can become the master of the heart; learning and career can become the master; people's recognition and a secure future can become the master. Even the career of

one's life of faith can become an idol of self-righteousness. One can stand before the Lord with the thought: I have believed long, I have done much work, I have been more self-controlled than others. But the Lord's word does not stop at praising our exterior; it exposes the master in the deepest place of the heart.

We must not forget the fact that Jesus spoke to that man because He loved him. When the Lord breaks our self-righteousness, it is not to abandon us to despair. It is the love that will not let us be assured of eternal life on a false foundation. Only when the confidence that I can do it collapses can we see what God has done. As long as we keep submitting what we have kept and what we have given up as the ground of salvation, the salvation Jesus accomplished does not come into clear view. So the Word shines painfully into the heart, but that pain is the hand of love reaching toward life.

## Why he went away sorrowing, and why the disciples were astonished

Because he had great possessions, the man went away with a sad face, sorrowing. Before he met the Lord, his wealth would have been his pride. But before the Lord's word, that wealth became the rope that bound him. He had the wish to obtain eternal life, and he also had the heart that did not want to let go of what he now had. He tried to hold both together, but before the Lord's word his heart was split. In the end he chose the life his wealth guaranteed and moved away from Jesus.

If we read this scene only as the failure of one rich man, we push the Word far from ourselves. We too can appear to draw near to the Lord while expecting only that He will approve and bless our own plans. We can listen to the Word yet receive it

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only within the range that does not touch the purpose we have already fixed. We can follow when praised, and withdraw sorrowing when He exposes what we depend on. Then we are not following Jesus as Lord but treating Him only as a teacher who supplements our life.

Jesus looked around at His disciples and said that it is very hard for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. He even said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. This word is not a slight lowering of human possibility. For a camel to go through the eye of a needle is not a difficult task that a man can accomplish by honing his skill and concentrating. It is a word that shows impossibility. It was a natural response that the disciples were greatly astonished and asked who then could be saved.

People commonly think that property and social stability prove the blessing of God. It is easy to think that a person who has much would also be nearer to the kingdom of God. But Jesus said that the very favorable conditions a man depends on can instead grip his heart. So the disciples' question widens from a question about the rich into a question about everyone. If the one who has depends on his possessions, and the one who has not depends on his craving for possessions, who on earth can save himself?

At exactly this point the center of the passage moves from *"What shall I do"* to *"With God."* To the disciples' question Jesus said, *"With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27)*. The Lord did not say that the rich man could make it with a little more effort. Nor did He say that the poor could make it by their own strength. He declared that with men it is impossible. The key that opens the door of salvation does not lie in man's good deeds, resolutions,

renunciations, or religious achievements.

This declaration is not a word that ends in despair. At the very place where man's way is blocked, God's way opens. With God all things are possible. Because man cannot wash away his own sins, cannot produce perfect righteousness, and cannot overcome death, God has accomplished salvation Himself. Human impossibility is not the end of the gospel but the door that makes us look at what God has done.

## In the salvation God accomplished, nothing remains for man to add

God sent His only begotten Son Jesus Christ to save sinners. Jesus is the sinless Son of God, but by being baptized by John the Baptist He bore all the sins of the world. The sins He then bore were not the sins remaining after a part had been subtracted by man's deeds. Our root sin and all the sins of our whole life passed over to Jesus. Jesus carried those sins, was crucified and judged and died, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. What God alone can do, God actually did.

Therefore the remission of sin is not a reward received in proportion to how well I have kept the commandments. Nor is it a prize given more largely to the one who has given up much property. When we believe in our hearts what Jesus accomplished once and for all, all our sins disappear once and for all. A man receives the remission of sin not by putting forward his own merits but by believing the perfect salvation God accomplished. By this faith he becomes a righteous man without sin, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and is born again as God's child. The ground of salvation lies not in how long my resolution holds out but in how perfect Jesus' work of salvation is.

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Before this gospel no one can boast of his report card. The man who has kept the commandments from his youth is saved by grace, and the man who has failed again and again is saved by the same grace. The rich cannot make their wealth the ground of salvation, and the poor cannot make their poverty their merit. All stand in the place where man can do nothing, and receive in faith what God has done. This is the gospel that humbles man without driving him to despair. It does not praise our possibility, but it surely proclaims God's possibility.

Even after receiving the remission of sin, there is weakness of the flesh and we can do wrong. But the salvation Jesus accomplished once and for all does not revert to incompleteness because of that weakness. A life of confessing and turning from faults is needed, but that confession does not complete Jesus' redemption anew each time. The believer lives leaning not on his own feelings but on the fact that Jesus bore sins with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again and completed salvation. Even when the heart wavers, rather than taking out the ledger of our own deeds again, we look again at the salvation God accomplished.

When the cause of salvation becomes clear like this, the place of the good life is also set right. Obedience, offering, service, helping poor neighbors, and preaching the gospel are not prices paid to be saved. They are fruits that the person who has received the remission of sin bears in gratitude and faith. The fruit does not replace the root. It is not the fruit that makes the tree live; the living tree bears fruit. In the same way, good deeds do not save us; the person God has saved learns and does good works in the leading of the Holy Spirit.

That works are not the condition of salvation does not mean that works are meaningless. After the Lord saves us, He also governs our life, our possessions, and our time. We must not

serve money as an idol but use it as what God has entrusted. We must care responsibly for the needs of our family, work honestly, not turn away from our neighbor's hardship, and take part gladly in serving the gospel. Only, while doing all this, we do not make it a receipt of salvation to hold out to God. We live in gratitude because of the life already received freely.

## Not the merit of abandoning possessions, but a life whose owner has changed

To apply rightly the word spoken to the rich man, we must distinguish between the condition of salvation and the following that comes after salvation. That man could not give up his wealth, and so the limit of his self-righteousness was exposed. But we do not become different from him merely by the fact that we have disposed of some property. If we boast of the act of abandoning property itself, another self-righteousness arises. The thought that I have sacrificed more and given more than others can occupy the throne of the heart. The Lord is not One who merely changes the list of what we own; He changes the master of the heart.

The person who has received the remission of sin learns that what he has is ultimately not his own. Life, time, talent, and material things are all entrusted by God. So he does not boast of what he has or dominate others with it. Neither does he regard material things as unconditionally evil and evade responsibility. He works hard, supplies what is needed, and manages rightly, but he does not let wealth climb to a place higher than God. When the Lord's will and the profit of one's possessions collide, what one loves more is revealed.

One believer who had preached the gospel long pondered

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whether to remain in an environment where a stable future was guaranteed or to leave that place and preach the gospel, and after long deliberation he chose the latter. The core of this experience is not a formula that every believer must abandon the same occupation and environment. It is the testimony that faith does not stay in abstract admiration but changes the actual priorities of life. The heart that would not love stability and honor more than the Lord appeared in a concrete choice.

To us also, each in his different place, the same questions come. Are we not trying to save face first, before doing the things that please God? Are we not treating the serving of the gospel and the church as other people's business, while pouring our hearts only into what concerns our own profit? Are we not merely rushing to finish the work given to us, without giving our heart and mind in faithfulness? These questions are not meant to drag us back to salvation by works. They make us examine what we love and how we are living, as those who have received the remission of sin.

The fruits of faith do not appear in the same shape and at the same speed in everyone. One serves with material things, another serves with time and skill, and another, even in a sick body, prays and comforts. We must not judge salvation by the size of outward results. But neither must we say that because fruit is not the condition of salvation, it is all right to remain indifferent to the Lord's will. The person who has received life wants to please the One who gave him life, however clumsy and lacking he may be. When he falls, he returns to the gospel and learns again, and he puts his heart into the small work entrusted to him.

The rich man came running to Jesus but went away sorrowing. Between his beginning and his end stood the word of the Lord. The Word exposed the gap between the self he

imagined and his actual heart. We too, when we hear the Word, must not expect only praise. When the Lord exposes a hidden idol, we must acknowledge it rather than make excuses. But from there we must not strain to produce some greater sacrifice by our own strength; we must return to God, who accomplished the salvation that man cannot.

## The gospel's answer to the question of eternal life

Today's passage begins with the question *"What shall I do,"* but it ends with the answer that with God all things are possible. This move must take place. We must lay down the thought that if I become better, give up more, and try harder, I will arrive at salvation. All man's efforts cannot produce perfect righteousness before God. But God has already accomplished perfect salvation in Jesus Christ.

If you are one who still depends on your own works, you must honestly acknowledge your impossibility before the Lord's word. Do not only count the memories of keeping the commandments; see what you have loved and depended on more than God. And do not look for new merits to fill up your lack, but believe in the sin of the world that Jesus bore by receiving baptism at the Jordan, in the judgment of the Cross, and in the resurrection. To the one who believes, all sins disappear once and for all and eternal life is given. This is not a result man has achieved but the grace God has bestowed.

If you have already received the remission of sin, do not change the ground of salvation back into works. Escape from the life of being proud when you do well and doubting even your salvation when you fall short. Stand firm on the salvation God accomplished, and bear fruit worthy of the grace received. Do

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not let wealth rule you, do not let honor and stability take the Lord's place, and give your heart to the work entrusted to you. That obedience is not the price paid for eternal life but the way the eternal life already received moves in your living.

The Lord saw the rich man's heart before He saw his wealth, and loving him, He told him the truth. With the same love He shines today on our self-righteousness. Let us not become those who go away sorrowing before the Lord's light. Let us lay down the merits held in our hands and the idols gripping our hearts, and believe in the salvation God has accomplished. And as saved people, let us gladly follow the Lord, the Owner of our possessions and our lives. With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Our eternal life hangs on exactly that work God has done. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

# “He is calling you”— Bartimaeus, who followed Jesus on the road

**< Mark 10:46-52 >**

**“Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you.’ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ The blind man said to Him, ‘Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.”**

## The man who sat by the road and heard the news of Jesus

It was when Jesus was going out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude. The road was full of people moving along,

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but Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside. The Scripture introduces him precisely as a beggar with a visual disability. We must not use this fact as a sign that he had more sin or was spiritually inferior. Disability does not prove a person's sin or lack of faith. The passage is the event in which Jesus met one man in his actual circumstances and made him see.

In Bartimaeus' life of not seeing there were clear constraints. His situation, having to beg by the roadside in those days, shows even the hardship of his livelihood. But the passage does not leave him as merely a pitiable background figure. The words Jesus of Nazareth reached his ears, and he responded to the news he heard. He could not see, but he could hear; he kept what he heard in his heart, and he came to Jesus with his own need. His circumstances did not define the whole of his being.

Many people were walking the road together with Jesus. Many saw Jesus with their eyes and many moved close beside Him. But the Scripture focuses on the cry of Bartimaeus, who sat by the roadside. Being around Jesus and believing in and seeking Jesus are not the same. Merely mingling in a crowd and experiencing a religious atmosphere is not enough. We must hear who the Lord is, and come to Him with what we truly need.

When Bartimaeus heard the words Jesus of Nazareth, he called Him Jesus, Son of David. He did not stop at repeating the place-name title people were using. In the call Son of David is contained the expectation of the King God would send, the promised Messiah. We cannot assert as fact, beyond the text, how far he understood that content. But what is clear is that he called out to Jesus as the Son of David and sought mercy.

Faith is not something that moves only after confirming everything with the eyes. It is hearing the Word of God and the blessed news about Jesus and turning the heart to Him. Bartimaeus did not boast of any qualification he had. He did not

ask that his merits be regarded, nor did he present reasons why he was better than others. He only cried out for mercy on himself. To seek mercy is the attitude that entrusts oneself to the goodness and the power of the Lord.

## The mercy he sought more loudly than the voices telling him to be quiet

When Bartimaeus cried out, many people rebuked him and told him to be quiet. The Scripture does not explain in detail why the crowd did so. We need not imagine their motives and speak of them as fact. We can only see that a real hindrance arose before Bartimaeus' cry, and that he did not stop because of that hindrance. He cried out all the more, asking the Son of David to have mercy on him.

In his plea there was the clarity of knowing what he needed. Coming to Jesus was more important than keeping face. Not missing this opportunity was more important than how the people around him would judge him. If he had shouted once and then shut his mouth because of the people's rebuke, the meeting recorded in this passage would not have followed. He did not take his desperate situation lightly, nor did he think little of the mercy of Jesus.

We also run into many voices when we hear the gospel. The voice that says you are too lacking to come to God; the voice that says the sins you have committed are too many; the voice that says you may come to the Lord only after first making yourself clean—these block the heart. On the other side there is also the voice that says your present circumstances are fine, so there is no need to think seriously about the problem of sin. These thoughts look opposite to each other, but they all keep a

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person from coming directly to Jesus. One blocks with despair and the other blocks with indifference.

Bartimaeus' cry was not heard because of the beauty of its eloquence. He did not list complicated qualifications. He sought mercy from Jesus, the Son of David. We also must not dress up our merits before God. We must not insist that we have no sin, nor speak as if our sin were too great even for Jesus to save. We must hear what the Savior God sent has accomplished, and seek that grace.

Yet we must not turn Bartimaeus' loud voice into a formula for a particular method of prayer. The volume of the voice is not the price that buys a miracle. Nor does it mean that the person who cannot cry loudly has little faith. What the passage stresses is that he did not give up his plea toward Jesus despite the crowd's restraint. Faith regards the Lord's mercy as greater than people's evaluation, and keeps the heart set on the Lord even among blocking voices.

## Jesus, who stood still, and the news, *"He is calling you"*

When Bartimaeus cried out all the more, Jesus stood still. On a road where a great multitude was moving, the Lord did not turn away from one man's plea. And He said to call him. The words of the people who had been rebuking him a moment before now changed. They told Bartimaeus to be of good cheer and rise, saying that Jesus was calling him. People's attitudes can change, but it was Jesus' call that raised him up.

*"Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you" (Mark 10:49)* These words announced a new situation to Bartimaeus, who had been sitting by the road. He was not a man left abandoned at the

edge of the crowd. Jesus had called him. While people blocked the way he could not move, but when the Lord's call was delivered, there was a reason to rise and a way to go forward. Faith does not entrust the conclusion of one's life to the words of those who block, but responds to the word of the Lord who calls.

Bartimaeus threw aside his garment, rose up quickly, and came to Jesus. In his situation the garment would have been a precious possession. But since the text itself does not explain the economic value of the garment in detail, we must not conclude that it was the price of salvation. Nor was the act of throwing away the garment itself the merit that opened his eyes. What matters is the fact that, having heard the call, he rose without delay and came to Jesus.

If we turn this scene into a rule that every believer must throw away what he has to be saved, we fall into the same misunderstanding as with the rich man earlier. Man's giving up does not buy salvation. The One who called and healed Bartimaeus is Jesus. His action was not the cause that produced grace, but the response of believing the call he had heard and coming forward. Faith does not calculate its own sacrifice and bargain with the Lord. Believing that the One who calls is good and able, it comes to Him.

Today also the gospel makes people rise with good cheer. To the person who sat collapsed under sin, unable to make a way of salvation by his own strength, what Jesus Christ has accomplished is delivered. God does not leave sinners alone but calls them with the Word. Before this call we do not need to complete our qualifications first. Rather, we must acknowledge that we cannot produce any qualification, and believe in the Savior who has drawn near to us.

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## The wish made plain before the question, 'What do you want?'

Jesus asked Bartimaeus what he wanted Him to do for him. It was not that the Lord did not know his situation and sought information. He had Bartimaeus speak his wish directly before Him. He did not ask for money or honor or a high seat. He answered plainly that he wanted to see. He did not hide his actual need, nor did he change it into a request that would sound plausible to others.

In Mark chapter 10, just before the event of Bartimaeus, James and John asked for the high seats in glory. They had long followed at Jesus' side, but their interest was fixed on the seats of honor. In contrast, Bartimaeus by the roadside sought mercy and wanted to see. This contrast makes us examine what we are asking before the Lord. Are we seeking through Jesus only to be raised above others and to have our circumstances made comfortable? Or do we know our most fundamental need and seek the Lord's grace?

Man's most fundamental problem is sin before God. But in saying this we must not turn Bartimaeus' visual disability into a symbol of sin, or portray people with disabilities as spiritually dark. His disability and healing must be respected as actual events. Apart from that, all people, with or without disabilities, are sinners and need the salvation of Jesus. The person who sees the world well with his eyes also cannot remove his sin by his own deeds, and the person with a disability also receives the complete remission of sin by believing the same gospel.

Our problem of sin is not solved by money or education or religious reputation. Comfort that makes us forget guilt for a while, or improvement in the circumstances of life, cannot remove sin itself. So when we hear the gospel, what we truly

want must be clear. We must ask whether we want merely a religion that eases the mind, or help that will make us succeed in the world, or whether we want all our sins to disappear by believing the remission of sin God has accomplished.

Jesus came to solve our fundamental need. The Son of God bore the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, carried that sin and was judged and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. God did not shut His eyes to sin; He passed it on to Jesus and had Him bear the wages of that sin. And by the resurrection He showed that that salvation was completed. Whoever believes this in his heart is washed of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God.

The remission of sin is not completed little by little through repeated religious acts. Because Jesus took over all sins with the baptism He received from John, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again and has already completed it, the believer receives it once and for all. This does not mean that after receiving the remission of sin we may take wrongdoing lightly. When we do wrong through the weakness of the flesh, we must confess and turn. But our turning does not supplement some missing part of Jesus' redemption. Salvation is complete, and the saved person, because of that grace, comes to hate sin and learn the right way.

Bartimaeus did not hide his wish from Jesus. We also must not wrap up the needs of our hearts in something else before the Word. If we have sin yet seek only people's praise, or need the remission of sin yet seek only the conveniences of life, the fundamental problem remains. We must stand honestly before the Lord, acknowledge that we cannot remove our sins ourselves, and believe in the salvation Jesus accomplished. To the one who seeks salvation the Lord gives not human merit but the

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completed gospel.

## ‘Your faith has saved you,’ and the grace of receiving sight at once

Jesus told Bartimaeus to go his way, saying that his faith had saved him. Then he immediately received his sight. The power of healing was with Jesus, and Bartimaeus believed in Him. It was not how loudly he raised his voice, how quickly he threw off his garment, or how long he had suffered by the roadside that made up the price of healing. The word and the power of Jesus gave him a new reality.

We must not make faith itself into yet another merit. Faith is not a price offered to God to extract salvation. Faith is receiving with empty hands what Jesus has done. Bartimaeus did not heal his own eyes first and then come to Jesus. He came to the Lord just as he was, in a condition he could not heal, and by the Lord’s word he came to see. The sinner likewise does not first make his own heart clean and then believe the gospel. Because he cannot make it clean, he believes in the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished.

We must not promise that if one believes in Jesus’ salvation his feelings will always be bright and his circumstances always smooth. Nor can we turn the actual healing that happened to Bartimaeus into a formula that every disease of every believer is healed at once. God can heal the sick even now, and we may humbly ask. But we must not judge mechanically, by whether healing occurs, the remission of sin or the genuineness of faith. The certain result the gospel promises is that all the sins of the one who believes disappear and he becomes a child of God.

The person who has received the remission of sin has the

standing of his heart changed. Because he believes the work of Jesus, who bore the sins of his past and present and future, he confesses that he is a righteous man without sin before God. This is not a boast that he has lived without blemish. There is still lack in the flesh, but it is the confession of faith that Jesus has paid the wages of sin completely. When Satan digs up past failures and present weakness to drag us down again into the standing of a sinner, we must hold to the facts of the gospel rather than our feelings.

The person who has received the remission of sin also needs the exhortation to enjoy the grace already received. This does not mean equating disability with sin. When God has declared us righteous, we must not live holding on only to self-condemnation. Even when circumstances are hard, we must live believing the life God has given and the comfort of the Holy Spirit. The gospel gives not empty optimism but hope grounded on the completed work of Jesus.

To enjoy grace is not to deny the pains of reality. We may weep when sad, admit failure, and seek the help we need. Only, we believe that none of those situations can cancel the standing of a child of God. The assurance of the remission of sin does not make us pretend not to know our problems; it makes us come to God even in the midst of problems. Just as Bartimaeus stated his need plainly, we too can live boldly within the gospel without hiding our weakness.

## After receiving his sight, he followed on the road

The end of the passage does not stop at the fact that Bartimaeus came to see. He immediately received his sight and followed Jesus on the road. Before the healing he sat by the road;

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after receiving the healing he followed Jesus on the road. The change is vivid. But we must not reverse the order. It was not that he first followed well for a long time and received sight as the reward. He came to see by the word of Jesus, and after receiving that grace he followed Jesus.

This order is important for understanding salvation and the fruit of faith. We do not buy the remission of sin by obedience; we learn obedience after receiving the remission of sin. Preaching the gospel, serving the church, helping neighbors, and giving material things are not maintenance fees for salvation. They are fruit in which the life received from Jesus appears in living. If we put Bartimaeus' following first as a condition of salvation, we turn grace into works; and if on the contrary we treat following as meaningless, we erase the new life that grace has produced.

Following does not begin only with grand things. It begins with hearing the Lord's word and obeying one step. There is the life of speaking honestly, praying for the person one used to hate, doing one's work faithfully, and looking after neighbors who need help. There is the life of preaching to those who do not know the gospel the remission of sin Jesus accomplished, not pushing away the weak in the community, and gladly sharing one's talents and time. All these fruits must point not to man's boasting but to the Lord who gave grace.

In particular, we must watch ourselves so as not to become like the crowd that tried to silence Bartimaeus. When the weak, the poor, those with disabilities, and those unfamiliar in speech and behavior try to come to the Lord within the church, do we not push them away, putting forward propriety and order? A community certainly needs order, but order must not become a barrier that distances people from the Lord. We must become a community that says to the person Jesus has called, Be of good

cheer and rise, and opens the way.

The scene in which the people who once blocked him delivered the call after hearing Jesus' word is also precious. A person need not remain in a wrong attitude. When he hears the Lord's will, he turns and becomes an instrument that helps others. If yesterday we judged someone, today we can make room at our side so that he may hear the Word. Rather than keep condemning ourselves over yesterday's failure, we must admit the wrong and obey the Lord's direction. Grace changes even those who blocked the way into those who guide it.

The road on which Bartimaeus followed Jesus was the road toward Jerusalem. Just before this passage, Jesus taught that He came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Bartimaeus did not follow after understanding everything; he followed on the road the Jesus who had called him and made him see. We also do not follow because we can control all our tomorrows. We follow His word because the Lord who bore our sins and saved us is faithful.

## Let us hear the call and walk by the grace received

In today's passage several voices appear. There is the news that Jesus is passing by; there is the crowd's rebuke telling him to be quiet; there is Bartimaeus' louder plea; and there is Jesus' word to call him. On which voice does our heart set the final authority? We must not let people's evaluations decide our qualification. Nor must we let our own fear draw the conclusion. We must hear the word of Jesus, who calls and saves sinners.

If you have not yet received the remission of sin, stop trying to fix yourself first and come to Jesus. The Savior God sent received baptism from John the Baptist and bore all sins,

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received that judgment on the Cross, and completed salvation by the resurrection. If you believe this gospel in your heart, all your sins disappear once and for all. Repeated good deeds or great sacrifices cannot take the place of that work. Jesus has done it all, and to the one who believes He gives the Holy Spirit and eternal life.

If you have already received the remission of sin, let us not live forgetting grace, like a man still slumped by the roadside. Even when weakness comes, let us not deny the standing of the righteous, but enjoy in faith the life we have received. At the same time, let us not shut grace up inside ourselves, but follow Jesus on the road. This following is not a price paid to obtain salvation. It is the response of gratitude offered to the Lord, who called us and saved us from all our sins.

Also, let us not block another person's cry. Let us not judge by his circumstances, his appearance, and his past that he is unqualified to come near the Lord. The gospel is the power of God needed by everyone. Let us tell them: Be of good cheer and rise—Jesus is calling sinners. Our words and our serving must lead people not to be bound to us but to come to Jesus.

Bartimaeus was not a man forgotten because of his sightless condition. Jesus heard his plea and stood still, called him, asked what he wanted, and made him see by His word. After the grace he received, he followed Jesus on the road. Let us keep this blessed order in our hearts. The Lord first calls and bestows grace. We believe and receive that grace, and as those who have received it, we walk the road together with the Lord. Today also, let us hear the word that calls us, rise, and follow Jesus with gratitude and faith. ✉

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# CHAPTER

# 11

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# Mark Chapter 11

**< Mark 11:1-33 >**

**“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it,’ and immediately he will send it here.’ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, ‘What are you doing, loosing the colt?’ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’ And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus**

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**said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. 'And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.' Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will**

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**ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men''—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, 'We do not know.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'"**

## 1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 11 records how Jesus, after entering Jerusalem riding on a colt, used the fruitless fig tree as a sign of judgment and drove out those who were doing business in the temple. Jesus rode the colt the disciples brought, and many people spread their clothes and branches on the road and cried out, *"Hosanna!"* Jesus went into the temple, looked around at all things, and went out to Bethany. The next day, seeing a fig tree that was full of leaves but had no fruit, He said that no one would ever eat fruit from that tree again. Then He went into the temple, drove out those who bought and sold, overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves, and rebuked them for making the house of God a den of thieves. On the following day the disciples were amazed to see the fig tree dried up from the roots, and Jesus taught them to have faith in God, to pray without doubting, and to forgive others. At the end, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders demanded to know where Jesus' authority came from. Jesus asked them in return whether the ministry of John the Baptist

was from heaven or from men, and when the leaders avoided a truthful answer, He said that neither would He tell them the source of His authority. This chapter shows that Jesus is the humble King and at the same time God, who has authority over the temple, over nature, and over all people, and it warns against the faith that flourishes only in outward appearance without the fruit of faith and obedience.

**1. Jesus, who had the colt prepared (verses 1–6)**

When Jesus and His disciples came to Bethphage and Bethany near Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of His disciples to the village opposite them. He said that when they entered the village they would find a colt tied on which no one had yet sat, and told them to loose it and bring it.

He said that if anyone asked why they were loosing the colt, they should say, *"The Lord has need of it."* When the disciples went, everything was just as Jesus had said. People asked what they were doing, loosing the colt, and when the disciples answered as Jesus had told them, they let them go.

This event shows that Jesus knew what was going to happen and prepared His own entry into Jerusalem at His own initiative. Jesus did not discover the colt by chance; He knew the place and the circumstances that were needed and sent His disciples.

The disciples did not obey after first understanding all the circumstances. When they believed Jesus' word, went, and did just as He said, they found that everything had already been prepared. The obedience of faith is not moving only after confirming every outcome first; it is trusting the One who spoke and doing the work entrusted to us.

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**2. Entering Jerusalem as the humble King (verses 7–10)**

The disciples brought the colt to Jesus and laid their clothes on it, and Jesus sat on it. Many people spread their own clothes on the road, and others spread branches they had cut in the fields. This was an act of welcoming Jesus like a king.

The sight of Jesus riding a colt was different from that of a conqueror riding a horse and displaying military majesty. Jesus entered Jerusalem as a humble King who brings peace. This calls to mind the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 that the King comes riding on a colt.

The multitude cried out, *"Hosanna!"* Hosanna originally carries the meaning of the plea *"Save now,"* and at the same time it was used as a shout of praise offered to God. The people welcomed Jesus, praising *"He who comes in the name of the LORD"* and the kingdom of David.

But we cannot say that the people all understood Jesus' mission accurately. Among them there must have been those who expected Jesus to drive out the Roman rule and establish a political kingdom. Jesus was not a king who came to seize the power of the world, but the King who walks the way of suffering and the Cross to save sinners.

**3. Looking around the temple and going out to Bethany (verse 11)**

Jesus entered Jerusalem and went to the temple. And He looked around at all things in the temple. Since the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

That Jesus did not overturn the tables in the temple immediately on the first day but looked around at all things shows that His action the next day did not come from momentary anger. Jesus acted deliberately after clearly examining the state of the temple.

The temple was to be the place where the name of God was exalted and people prayed to God and learned His Word. But the temple Jesus saw was a place where religious trade and the interests of the leaders were deeply seated. Outwardly, splendid worship continued, but its center had drifted far from the will of God.

**4. Rebuking the fruitless fig tree (verses 12–14)**

The next day, when Jesus and His disciples came out from Bethany, Jesus was hungry. Seeing from afar a fig tree with abundant leaves, He looked to see whether it had fruit, but there was nothing except leaves. The passage records that it was not yet the season for figs.

Jesus said to the tree that no one would ever eat fruit from it again, and His disciples heard it. This event must not be understood as though Jesus did not know the season of figs or became emotionally angry at a tree because of hunger.

That the passage places the cleansing of the temple between the two scenes of the fruitless fig tree shows that the two events are connected with each other. Just as the fig tree was full of leaves but had no fruit, the temple of that day was full of sacrifices, ceremonies, and religious activity, but it lacked the fruit of faith, righteousness, and mercy that God seeks.

The passage does not directly explain that the fig tree stands for one particular object. But when we see the position of the event together with the content of the cleansing of the temple, it is a sign of judgment on the faith that has only outward godliness like leaves and lacks the actual fruit of faith and obedience.

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### 5. Driving out those who did business in the temple (verses 15–16)

Jesus returned to Jerusalem and went into the temple. He drove out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. Nor did He allow the temple to be used like a shortcut for carrying goods through it.

Selling offerings and doves and changing money in the temple may have had the practical reason of helping the sacrifices of those who came from far away. But as such trade came to occupy the center of worship and turned into a means for people's profit, it blurred the original purpose of the temple.

Jesus' action was not a mere tidying of facilities or an improvement of the environment of worship. It was an act of judgment on the reality in which people gained profit by using the name of God, and religious institutions and trade hindered the worship of those who sought God.

Jesus acted with authority over the temple. By correcting the wrongs of the temple without the permission of the religious leaders of the day, He showed that He is the One who has the authority to govern and judge the house of God.

### 6. A house of prayer for all nations, and a den of thieves (verse 17)

Jesus quoted the word of Isaiah: "*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.*" The temple was to be not a place for the profit of particular leaders but the house where all nations seek God and pray.

Jesus rebuked the people of that day for making the temple a "*den of thieves.*" A den of thieves is the place where robbers hide themselves after committing their crimes. Greed and unrighteousness cannot be covered up or justified on the

ground that one takes part in religious ceremonies.

God does not look only at the scale of outward sacrifices and religious activities. He looks at whether His will is honored within them, whether the weak are protected, and whether people are truly seeking God.

Today also, we must not make acts of faith such as worship, service, and offerings a means of gaining our own honor and profit. If someone uses the name of God while actually pursuing greed and power, he can commit the same wrong as those who did business in the temple.

**7. The religious leaders who sought to kill Jesus (verses 18–19)**

The chief priests and the scribes heard Jesus' words and discussed how they might destroy Him. Rather than turning from their wrongs at Jesus' rebuke, they sought to remove Him.

They feared Jesus because the multitude was astonished at His teaching. Their interest lay not in the will of God but in guarding the religious authority and influence they possessed.

When a person hears the truth and is pricked in heart, he can show one of two attitudes. He can acknowledge his wrong and turn back, or he can hate the one who delivered the truth and try to do away with that word. Having much religious position and knowledge does not necessarily mean obeying the Word of God.

Even under the threats of the leaders, Jesus did not change the truth or look away from the wrongs of the temple. When evening came, Jesus and His disciples went outside the city.

**8. The fig tree withered from the roots (verses 20–21)**

The next morning, as Jesus and His disciples passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. Peter remembered

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what Jesus had said the day before and said that the fig tree He had cursed had withered.

That the fig tree did not merely wilt in its leaves but dried up from the roots shows that Jesus' word did not affect only the outward part but was fulfilled completely in the whole tree. The word of Jesus is surely fulfilled.

This event warns that no one can be acknowledged by God merely by what looks abundant on the outside. Even with many years of faith, much knowledge, many offices, and many activities, if the actual fruit of believing and obeying God is absent, one can be like a tree with nothing but leaves.

The fruit of faith does not mean only an exterior that looks godly to people. It must appear in a life that believes the Word of God, turns from wrong, loves others, and faithfully does the work entrusted to it.

**9. The word, *"Have faith in God"* (verses 22–24).**

When Peter was amazed at the withered fig tree, Jesus first said, *"Have faith in God."* The center of faith is not man's strong will or positive thinking but the living and almighty God.

Jesus said that whoever says to the mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart but believes that it will be done, it will be so for him. The mountain represents a huge obstacle that human strength cannot move.

This word does not mean that whatever a person wants will surely come true if only he declares it with his mouth. Faith is not using God as a tool for achieving one's own desires. It is believing God's power and faithfulness and asking according to His will.

The word *"whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them"* means that we should believe that God

has heard our prayer even before the visible result appears. Whoever has prayed in faith entrusts the result, the timing, and the method to God, and must trust that God works for good even when the answer differs from his expectation.

Faith is not self-suggestion that denies reality. It is acknowledging real difficulties while looking to God, who is greater than those difficulties. The trust that what God has said will surely be fulfilled is the foundation of faith.

**10. Forgive others when you pray (verse 25)**

Jesus said that when we stand praying, if we have anything against anyone, we should forgive him. The life of believing in God and praying and the forgiveness of others cannot be separated from each other.

If a person has received God's mercy and the remission of all his sins, and yet harbors hatred and revenge toward others to the end, his attitude in prayer and his life do not agree. Whoever has received the grace of God must strive to forgive those who have wronged him.

Forgiveness is not acknowledging the other person's wrong as right or acting as if there had been no harm. If there has been crime or abuse, one may seek the necessary protection and demand due responsibility. Nor does forgiving mean that broken trust and relationship are restored at once to their former state.

Forgiveness is not making oneself the judge and holding on to hatred and vengeance, but entrusting the final judgment to God. We should hope that the other person may turn back, and ask God for help so that we ourselves are not ruled by hatred.

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**11. The leaders who questioned Jesus' authority (verses 27–28)**

When Jesus was walking in the temple again, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. They asked Jesus by what authority He had done these things in the temple and who had given Him such authority.

Their question was not for learning Jesus' teaching sincerely. It was a question meant to make an issue of His stopping the trade in the temple and teaching the people without their permission, and to find grounds for accusing Him.

But Jesus' authority did not come from a human office or the approval of a religious organization. Jesus is the Son of God, the One who has the authority to judge and correct the temple according to His own will.

The leaders held the position of managing the temple, but they failed to recognize Jesus, the Owner of the temple. No one should think that having religious authority entitles him to control even the Word of God. Everyone's authority must stand under the Word of God.

**12. Asking in return about the authority of John the Baptist (verses 29–33)**

Jesus said He would ask them one thing: they should answer whether the baptism John the Baptist gave was from heaven or from men. If they answered, He too would tell them by what authority He did these things.

The leaders did not answer by the standard of truth but calculated which answer would be advantageous to them. If they said that John the Baptist's ministry was from heaven, they would be rebuked for not believing him; if they said it was from men, they had to fear the crowd, who regarded John as a prophet.

In the end they answered, *"We do not know."* It was not that they were actually unable to judge; they refused to answer in order to avoid exposing their own unbelief and contradiction. They had encountered enough word and evidence, but they had no heart to acknowledge the truth.

John the Baptist cried out to the people to repent and prepared the way of Jesus. The leaders who did not acknowledge his ministry as given by God did not receive the authority of Jesus, to whom John testified, either.

To those who would not answer truthfully, Jesus said that neither would He tell them by what authority He acted. The problem was not a lack of evidence but the hardened heart that would not acknowledge the evidence already given.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 11**

First, Jesus knew the place and the circumstances where a colt on which no one had yet sat was prepared, and sent His disciples, and the disciples obeyed His word.

Second, Jesus entered Jerusalem not as a military conqueror but as the humble and peaceful King riding on a colt.

Third, the multitude welcomed Jesus, crying Hosanna, but they did not all understand the meaning of the salvation Jesus would accomplish through suffering and the Cross.

Fourth, the fig tree that was full of leaves but had no fruit warns against the faith that has much outward religious activity but lacks the fruit of faith and obedience that God seeks.

Fifth, Jesus drove out those who had made the temple a place of trade and profit, and declared that the house of God must be a house of prayer for all nations.

Sixth, however many religious forms and activities there may be, if they are used as a means of hiding greed and unrighteousness, they cannot become worship that pleases God.

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Seventh, the chief priests and the scribes, rather than repenting at Jesus' rebuke, sought to kill Him in order to guard their own authority and interests.

Eighth, the event in which the fig tree dried up from the roots according to Jesus' word shows that His word has authority and is surely fulfilled.

Ninth, faith is not making one's own thoughts and words absolute, but trusting the almighty God and His Word.

Tenth, prayer is not a means of achieving human desires but an act of faith that seeks the will of God and entrusts the timing and the method of the answer to Him.

Eleventh, whoever has received the remission of sin and mercy from God must lay down hatred and vengeance toward others and strive to forgive.

Twelfth, the religious leaders questioned Jesus' authority, but by refusing to acknowledge even that the ministry of John the Baptist came from God, they exposed their own unbelief.

Thirteenth, the true worth of faith lies not in visible position and the scale of activity, but in believing and obeying the Word of God and bearing actual fruit.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 11 is the chapter in which Jesus entered Jerusalem as the humble King riding on a colt, restored the temple as a house of prayer, warned against faith that is all outward show through the fruitless fig tree and the hardened religious leaders, and then taught His disciples to believe the Word of God, to pray, to forgive others, and to bear the fruit of obedience.

## 2) Mark chapter 11 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 11 is the chapter in which Jesus entered Jerusalem as the humble King, judged the fruitless fig tree and the corrupted temple, and taught what true faith that believes the Word of God is. The temple of that day was full of sacrifices and religious activity, but it lacked the fruit of faith and obedience that God seeks. This makes us think of the faith whose outward religious life is abundant while the heart lacks the faith of the complete remission of sin.

Jesus, having taken upon Himself the sins of all mankind with the baptism He received from John, entered Jerusalem to receive the judgment of those sins. The plea for salvation that the multitude cried out in *"Hosanna"* is completely fulfilled through the salvation Jesus would accomplish by the Cross and the resurrection. Whoever believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and becomes the temple of God; he must live not as a religious person flourishing only in appearance, but as one who bears the fruit of faith, obedience, and the preaching of the gospel.

### 1. The tied colt loosed and brought to the Lord (verses 1–6)

Jesus told two of His disciples to go to the village opposite and loose a colt on which no one had yet sat and bring it. He told them to answer, *"The Lord has need of it,"* if anyone asked the reason, and when the disciples obeyed just so, everything came to pass according to Jesus' word.

The donkey is a beast that carries burdens all its life. Applied in the light of the gospel, as a donkey carries heavy loads, man lives carrying the burden of sin, condemnation, and death. And as the colt was tied, man is bound to sin, to his own

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desires, and to the values of the world, and cannot set himself free by his own strength.

In the Old Testament, to keep the firstborn of a donkey alive it had to be redeemed with a lamb in its place, and if it was not redeemed its neck had to be broken. This does not mean that Mark chapter 11 directly explains the colt as a symbol of the sinner. But the Old Testament ordinance in which a donkey lives through the sacrifice of a lamb makes us think of the redemption in which Jesus, the Lamb of God, died in the sinner's place and saved man.

Jesus received all people's sins onto Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and gave up His life on the Cross. A sinner is released from the chain of sin not because of his own good deeds or resolution, but because Jesus paid the wages of sin in his place.

Just as the tied colt was loosed and came to Jesus, whoever has received the remission of sin no longer lives only as a slave of sin and the world, but becomes a person who belongs to the Lord who saved him. The word *"The Lord has need of it"* makes us think of the fact that the Lord wants to use the saved in the work of the gospel.

### 2. The humble Savior who came riding on a colt (verses 7–10)

The disciples brought the colt and laid their clothes on it, and Jesus rode the colt into Jerusalem. People spread their clothes and branches on the road and welcomed Jesus, crying out, *"Hosanna."*

Jesus did not come in like a king of the world riding a warhorse and conquering enemies. He came humbly, riding a colt. The salvation Jesus would accomplish was not a matter of subduing people with military might or political power, but the

work of love in which He lowered Himself and died in the place of sinners.

*"Hosanna"* carries the meaning *"Save now."* Among the people of that day there must have been some who expected political salvation, deliverance from the rule of Rome; but what man needs more fundamentally is salvation from sin, judgment, and death.

Jesus entered Jerusalem to save sinners. People may have expected Jesus to establish a worldly kingdom at once with kingly power, but Jesus first had to pay the wages of mankind's sins on the Cross. Jesus is not a king who came to be served, but the King who came to give His life as a ransom.

The sinner must not stop at crying *"Hosanna"* but must know how Jesus has saved him. We must believe in Jesus not merely as a powerful one who solves the world's difficulties, but as the Savior who bore all sins and was judged in our place.

### 3. Jesus, who looked around at all things in the temple (verse 11)

After entering Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple and looked around at all things in it. When the day grew late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples. His act of cleansing the temple the next day did not come from momentary emotion; it was done deliberately after He had examined the state of the temple.

Jesus is the Owner of the temple. People saw Jesus as a man from Nazareth, but Jesus is God, who knows the hearts of men and everything that goes on in the temple. However splendid outward worship may be, He examines whether faith and truth are at its center.

The temple was the place that represented the presence of God, but a sinner cannot be reconciled to God merely by

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entering the outward temple. If sin remains in a person's heart, he cannot remove that sin himself, however many sacrifices and prayers he offers.

Jesus bore everyone's sins with the baptism He received from John and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. On the heart of the person who believes this gospel and receives the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit comes. The saved become the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

Whoever has become the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells must examine his own heart. He must not use the fact that he has received the remission of sin to justify his own desires, but must exalt the Word of God and live according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

**4. The fig tree that had abundant leaves but no fruit (verses 12–14)**

When Jesus was hungry, He saw from afar a fig tree with abundant leaves and looked for fruit. But the tree had nothing except leaves. Jesus said that no one would ever eat fruit from that tree again.

The passage records that it was not yet the season for figs. Therefore this event must not be understood as Jesus becoming angry at a tree without knowing the season. Seeing that the cleansing of the temple is placed between the two scenes of the fruitless fig tree, this event is a sign of judgment on religion that flourishes only in outward form.

In the temple of that day there were sacrifices and feasts, religious leaders and many people. Outwardly it was as abundant as a tree full of leaves. But the temple had changed from a place where all nations pray to God into a place centered on buying and selling and human profit.

A person, too, can have much religious knowledge, office,

and activity while having no true faith in his heart. If someone says with his lips that he believes in Jesus, yet believes that sin still remains in his heart and does not receive the word that Jesus has removed all sins, he cannot obtain the fruit of complete salvation.

The fruit God seeks first is not man's good deeds and achievements. It is the fruit of faith—receiving the remission of sin by believing in the salvation Jesus accomplished. After that, the fruits of thanksgiving, obedience, love, and the preaching of the gospel appear in the life of the one who has received the remission of sin.

**5. Driving out the trade that defiled the temple (verses 15–16)**

Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. Nor did He allow the temple to be used like a shortcut for carrying goods.

Selling offerings and doves and changing money may have had the justification of helping the sacrifices of those who came from afar. But as religious trade came to occupy the center of the temple and turned into a means for people's profit, the original purpose of the temple was damaged.

Man tries to offer money, offerings, and religious acts to God in order to solve his own sins. But the remission of sin is not something man buys by paying a price to God. However many offerings and gifts and much service a sinner may offer, he cannot remove his own sins directly.

Jesus bore the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and gave His own life on the Cross as the price of redemption. The price of the remission of sin is not the religious merit man pays but the life Jesus paid

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with His blood.

Therefore the gospel must not be used as a means of gaining money, honor, and power. We must not deceive people by using the name of God, or teach as if the remission of sin and blessing could be bought with money, or turn the preaching of the gospel into a business for our own profit.

**6. The house of God, where all nations pray (verse 17)**

Jesus said that the house of God is a house of prayer for all nations. The temple was to be not a place for the profit of particular religious leaders but the place where every nation and every person seeks God.

The gospel of the water and the Spirit is not a salvation given to the Jews only. In the sin of the world that Jesus bore are included the sins of all nations and of the people of every age. Whoever acknowledges that he is a sinner and believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished receives the remission of all his sins.

Prayer is not an act by which a person puts forward his own righteousness and makes demands of God. It is an act of faith in which one acknowledges that he is a creature who cannot live without God's grace, and seeks God's help and God's will.

The ground on which a sinner can draw near to God likewise does not lie in his hours of prayer or his devotion. Because Jesus removed all sins and made us at peace with God, the believer calls God Father and prays.

Jesus rebuked the people of that day for making the temple a *"den of thieves."* Religious forms must not be used as a hiding place that covers sin and greed. God looks not at the splendid appearance of worship but at whether there is within it the faith that believes the gospel and an honest heart.

**7. The religious leaders who sought to kill Jesus (verses 18–19)**

The chief priests and the scribes, on hearing Jesus' rebuke, looked for a way to kill Him rather than examining their own wrongs. Seeing the multitude astonished at His teaching, they feared losing their own authority and position.

Being pricked in heart when hearing the Word of God is an opportunity to turn back. But a person of strong self-righteousness does not admit his wrong before the Word; he may instead reject that word or hate the one who delivered it.

The leaders of that day had much knowledge of the Law and the temple, but they did not receive Jesus, to whom the Law testifies. Much religious knowledge does not automatically mean believing the gospel. If one exalts his own thoughts and position above the Word of God, he can even become an enemy of Jesus.

To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, one must lay down the religious righteousness he has piled up and his wrong beliefs. Even if the word that Jesus has completely removed all sins differs from one's existing thoughts, if the testimony of the Scriptures is right, one must receive that word.

**8. The fig tree withered from the roots (verses 20–21)**

The next day the disciples saw that the fig tree of which Jesus had spoken was dried up from the roots. Jesus' word did not end as a mere warning but was fulfilled just as He said.

That the fig tree dried up from the roots makes us think that mending only the outward leaves does not solve the fundamental problem. Man's fundamental sin does not disappear by correcting a few behaviors and adding religious habits.

Man is a being who produces sin from the root of his heart.

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Because hatred, greed, pride, and falsehood come out of the heart, no one can become completely clean before God merely by making his outward behavior tidy.

Jesus bore, with the baptism He received from John, all the sins that come out of man's heart and conduct, and on the Cross He received the judgment that reaches even the root of sin. The gospel does not merely cover the outside of sin; it is God's salvation that has completely solved all the sins a person commits in his whole life.

Whoever has received the remission of sin no longer needs to decorate himself with religious leaves. Though his deeds are lacking, he believes the fact that Jesus has removed all his sins, and stands honestly before God. And he must bear the actual fruit of faith under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

### 9. The word, *"Have faith in God,"* and saving faith (verses 22–24)

When Peter was amazed at the withered fig tree, Jesus said, *"Have faith in God."* The center of faith is not the believer's will or feelings but God, who speaks and fulfills what He has spoken.

Believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit is also a matter of trusting the Word of God. Looking at our own deeds and feelings, we may still seem lacking and feel like sinners; but Jesus bore all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. We must believe this unchanging fact of salvation.

When God says that all the judgment of sin was finished on the Cross, we must believe that no punishment of sin remains for us to receive again. Since the risen Jesus has completed salvation, there is no need to add human merit or repeated acts of atonement.

For a sinner to escape from sin and judgment by his own

strength is as impossible as lifting a mountain and throwing it into the sea. But God has accomplished the salvation that man cannot. Applied in the light of the gospel, the One who moved the huge mountain called sin is God, and man receives just as the Word says what God has done.

The word *"whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them"* must not be used as a guarantee that all one's desires will surely be fulfilled. True faith is not making God submit to one's own desires; it is trusting God's power and goodness and asking according to His will.

**10. The one who has received the remission of sin forgives others (verse 25)**

Jesus said that when we pray, if we have anything against anyone, we should forgive. Whoever has received great grace from God must extend forgiveness also toward those who have wronged him.

It is not because a person forgives others that the gospel of the water and the Spirit is completed. The remission of sin is received by believing in the salvation Jesus already accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Man's forgiving is not a merit that pays the price of salvation but the fruit of faith that flows from the grace received first.

If someone believes that he has received the remission of all his sins from God and yet holds on to another person's fault to the end and seeks revenge, he has forgotten the meaning of the grace he received. Even the saved can be wounded and can feel anger, but they must ask God for help so as not to live captured by hatred.

Forgiveness is not acknowledging a wrong as right or overlooking crime and abuse. One may seek necessary

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protection and demand due responsibility, and the restoration of broken trust may require time and sincere turning. Forgiveness is entrusting the final judgment to God and not letting vengeance rule one's heart.

The Holy Spirit leads the heart of the one who has received the remission of sin, so that he acknowledges his own faults and apologizes, and helps him to be patient with others' weaknesses and to forgive.

**11. The question, By what authority do You do these things? (verses 27–28)**

The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders asked Jesus by what authority He had cleansed the temple and who had given Him that authority. They sought grounds for accusing Jesus rather than learning from His words.

Jesus' authority was not received from man or from a religious organization. Jesus is the Son of God and, in His very nature, the Creator God. The authority to rule nature, to judge the temple, and to save sinners belongs to Jesus.

That Jesus took upon Himself the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist is because He is the Lamb of God and the sinless Son of God. An ordinary sinner cannot bear another person's sins in his place. Only Jesus, who is without sin, bore the sins of all mankind and was judged in their place.

Jesus, who died on the Cross, was not a helpless victim. After bearing the sins of mankind, He gave up His life in obedience to the will of God, and by rising from the dead He revealed His authority to rule over sin and death.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and, in His very nature, the Creator God. Therefore, to be saved, we must not treat Jesus merely as an excellent teacher or

religious leader, but believe in Him as God and the Savior, who has removed all sins.

### 12. The ministry of John the Baptist, which came from heaven (verses 29–33)

Jesus asked the religious leaders, *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?"* This question asked whether the ministry of John the Baptist was a religious activity man had made for himself, or a mission entrusted by God.

If the leaders answered that it came from heaven, they would be rebuked for not believing John the Baptist; if they said it came from men, they feared the crowd, who regarded him as a prophet. In the end, they did not answer by the standard of truth but calculated their own advantage and answered, *"We do not know."*

John the Baptist was not a man who appeared by his own idea; he was the messenger God sent to prepare the way of Jesus. He cried out to people to repent, made them realize that they were sinners, and turned them back to Jesus.

Moreover, John the Baptist baptized Jesus as the representative of mankind. With the baptism he gave, Jesus received onto Himself all the sins of mankind. Afterward John the Baptist testified of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Whoever does not acknowledge the authority of John the Baptist finds it hard to accept also the passing of sins that was accomplished through him. The religious leaders of that day did not believe John the Baptist, and they did not receive Jesus, of whom he testified, either. Their problem was not a lack of evidence but their rejection of the Word of God in order to guard their own righteousness and position.

To believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we

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must acknowledge the fact that the mission of John the Baptist came from heaven and that through him the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus. And we must believe the word that Jesus carried those sins, was judged on the Cross, and rose again.

**13. A life that bears the fruit of the gospel, not leaves**

The fig tree and the temple of Mark chapter 11 show that no one can please God with outward religious abundance alone. God looks not only at the exterior of faith but at whether the true faith of the gospel is in the heart.

The first fruit of the gospel is that the sinner believes in the salvation Jesus accomplished and receives the remission of sin. Doing many religious acts while sin remains cannot make anyone righteous before God. First we must believe the fact that all our sins passed on to Jesus and were judged.

After the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit comes upon the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit makes us realize the Word of God, discern our self-righteousness and desires, and leads us to serve the gospel and love others.

The fruit of faith is not a price paid to obtain salvation. It is the result that the person already saved freely bears in gratitude for that grace. The saved must not boast of their office and knowledge, but must preach the gospel to others, serve the weak, believe the Word of God and pray, and forgive those who have wronged them.

Just as the colt carried Jesus into Jerusalem, the one who has received the remission of sin must live a life that reveals Jesus, not one that displays his own glory. To serve so that people’s eyes turn not to ourselves but to Jesus, who saved us—this is the fruit a worker of the gospel must bear.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 11 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit**

First, the event in which the tied colt was loosed and came to Jesus makes us think of how a person bound to sin and the world gains freedom through Jesus' redemption and becomes one who belongs to the Lord.

Second, Jesus is the humble King who entered Jerusalem riding a colt, and the Savior who gave His own life to save sinners.

Third, the plea for salvation in *"Hosanna"* was completely fulfilled when Jesus bore the sins of mankind, was judged on the Cross, and rose again.

Fourth, the fig tree with abundant leaves and no fruit warns against the faith that has many religious forms and activities but lacks in the heart the faith that believes the gospel and the fruit of obedience.

Fifth, the first fruit a sinner must bear before God is to receive the remission of sin by believing in the salvation Jesus completed, without depending on his own deeds.

Sixth, Jesus bore all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price of those sins on the Cross, and rose again, completing salvation.

Seventh, like the religious trade carried on in the temple, the gospel and worship must not be used as a means of gaining money, honor, and power.

Eighth, on the heart of whoever believes this gospel and receives the remission of sin, the Holy Spirit comes, and that person becomes the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

Ninth, the word *"Have faith in God"* means trusting not one's own feelings or abilities, but God, who surely fulfills what He has spoken.

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Tenth, it is impossible for man to escape from sin and judgment by himself, but God has accomplished that impossible salvation through the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Eleventh, forgiving others is not a merit for obtaining the remission of sin, but the fruit of grace borne by the one who has received the remission of all his sins from God once and for all.

Twelfth, the ministry of John the Baptist was not a religious activity that came from man, but the mission God entrusted to him to prepare the way of Jesus and to have the sins of mankind pass on to Him.

Thirteenth, whoever has received the remission of sin must not boast of his outward religious life, but must bear the fruit of faith, obedience, serving, and the preaching of the gospel under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 11 is the chapter that shows that Jesus, the humble King who bore the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, entered Jerusalem, judged the greed that defiled the temple and the fruitless religion, and saved sinners by the Cross and the resurrection, and that therefore whoever believes this gospel and receives the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit must believe the Word of God, pray, forgive others, and bear the fruit of the gospel. ✉

Mark Chapter 11

# The King who seeks fruit

## Introduction

Mark chapter 11 begins with the scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem riding on a colt. The multitude cried out *"Hosanna"* and expected the kingdom of David to come. But Jesus did not enter to ascend a throne by worldly power. He was the humble King who would give up His own life to save sinners, and He went first not to a palace but to the temple, and examined it.

The event in which Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree and the event in which He cleansed the temple are connected with each other. The fig tree had abundant leaves but no fruit to offer the Lord, and the temple was full of sacrifices and religious activity but had none of the fruit of faith and righteousness that God seeks. The religious leaders made the house of God a place of greed and profit and rejected Jesus, the very Owner of the temple. Even outward godliness and religious activity cannot bear the fruit of life if one does not believe in the Son of God.

Jesus called the temple *"a house of prayer for all nations."* The house of God must be not a place for filling man's greed and exalting his name, but a place where sinners hear the Word, are saved, and come to God. Jesus bore all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and rose again in three days, completing salvation. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin, receives the Holy Spirit, and prays calling God Father.

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To the disciples who saw the fig tree withered from the roots, Jesus said, *"Have faith in God."* The prayer of faith is not a method of producing strong conviction in order to fulfill one's own desires. It is trusting God, who fulfills what He has spoken, and entrusting one's own will to Him. Moreover, whoever has received great forgiveness must not hold on to another's faults and seek revenge, but must forgive according to the grace he has received. Forgiveness is not a price paid to obtain salvation but the fruit of faith that appears in the saved.

The religious leaders asked Jesus by what authority He did these things, but they could not answer whether the authority of John the Baptist was from heaven or from men. They did not want to know the truth; they wanted to protect their position and save face. Mark chapter 11 teaches us not to stop at the welcome of the lips and at religious externals, but to believe in the King whom God has sent. True faith appears in a life that receives the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and bears the fruit God delights in through prayer, forgiveness, and serving.

## By entering Jerusalem riding a colt, Jesus showed that He is the humble King who came to save sinners

*"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, 'Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here.' So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they*

*loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, 'What are you doing, loosing the colt?' And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (Mark 11:1–10).*

Jesus passed through Jericho and drew near to Jerusalem. As He had said several times, the time was drawing near for Him to suffer and die in Jerusalem and to rise again in three days, completing the work of saving sinners. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was not simply an event welcomed by many people; it was the event in which the Christ promised by God entered as King to accomplish His work of salvation.

When Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, He sent two disciples to the village opposite. He said that when they entered it they would find a colt tied on which no one had yet sat, and told them to loose it and bring it. He also told them to say, *"The Lord has need of it,"* if anyone asked the reason. When the disciples went, everything was just as Jesus had said. This shows that Jesus did not enter Jerusalem dragged along by circumstances; He knew what would happen and moved according to the plan of God.

Jesus' word *"The Lord has need of it"* reveals that He is the true Owner of all things. That the colt's owner and the people standing by heard the disciples' words and permitted them also came to pass according to the Lord's word. Yet this word must not be applied today as though one may take another's property

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without permission. This event is a special event in which Jesus, the Owner of all things, rightly prepared and used what was needed for His work of salvation.

The colt Jesus rode was a beast on which no one had yet sat. This shows that the colt was set apart and used for the Lord's special purpose. The passage does not say that the colt had any special ability or merit. That colt became precious not because it was superior to other animals, but because the Lord chose and used it, and because it carried Jesus, the King of kings.

The sight of the tied colt being loosed and used by the Lord connects with the sight of a person, bound to sin and the world, being saved through the gospel of the water and the Spirit and serving the Lord's work. Man is born a slave of sin, lives dragged along by the desires of the flesh and the values of the world, and cannot escape the bondage of sin and death by his own strength. But when Jesus saves a sinner, he no longer remains under the condemnation of sin but lives as one who belongs to God.

However, there is no need to fix a particular spiritual meaning on every detail of the colt. The most important meaning of this event lies in the fact that Jesus entered Jerusalem as the King promised in the Old Testament. The prophet Zechariah prophesied that the King of Zion would come humbly, riding on a donkey. By fulfilling that prophecy, Jesus publicly revealed that He is the Christ for whom Israel had been waiting.

The kings of the world usually enter displaying power and majesty, riding warhorses. But Jesus rode not a warhorse, the symbol of war, but a colt. He was not a king who came to conquer enemies with military might or to oppress people with political power. He was the humble King who serves sinners and saves them by giving His own life as a ransom. The

kingdom of Jesus is not a kingdom built by the sword and coercion but a kingdom built on the righteousness, the truth, and the life of God.

The disciples laid their clothes on the colt, and Jesus sat on it. Many people spread their clothes on the road, and others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Spreading clothes and branches on the road expressed the attitude of honoring and welcoming a king. The multitude had seen the mighty works Jesus did, and they received Him fervently, expecting that He would restore the kingship of David.

Earlier, blind Bartimaeus called Jesus the *"Son of David."* Now the multitude heading for Jerusalem cried out about the coming *"kingdom of our father David."* According to God's promise given to David, the expectation that an eternal King would come was alive among the people. Jesus is indeed the Christ who came as the Son of David, and His kingship is greater and more eternal than any passing regime of this earth.

In the cry *"Hosanna"* is contained the plea *"Save now."* It was a cry longing for salvation and at the same time a praise exalting the One who comes in the name of the Lord. The multitude may have expected deliverance from the rule of Rome and the restoration of a strong nation like that of David's day. But the salvation man needs most fundamentally is not political liberation or material abundance but deliverance from sin and judgment.

People welcomed Jesus fervently, yet they did not fully know by what method He would establish His kingdom. They expected a glorious king, but Jesus was the King who would be nailed to the Cross. The purpose for which Jesus entered Jerusalem was not to occupy a palace or drive out the Roman army, but to carry the sin of the world He had already borne, go to the Cross, and receive the judgment of that sin in our place.

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Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus had taken upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. When the sinless Son of God was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all the sins of sinners passed over to Him. Therefore, the road Jesus walked toward Jerusalem was the road on which He carried not someone else's sins but the sins of mankind He had taken on Himself through His baptism, going forward to the place of judgment.

Carrying those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, paying all the wages of sin. And He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation. Therefore, the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are one perfect work accomplished by the King who saves sinners. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and comes to belong to the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of David that Jesus establishes is not a kingdom made up of bloodline or territory alone. It is the spiritual kingdom in which those who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit are governed by God. Jesus is not only their Savior but the King who rules their lives. Believers must not stop at calling Jesus King with their lips, but must exalt the Lord's word above their own thoughts and desires as they live.

The colt was loosed from the place where it was tied and entered Jerusalem carrying the Lord. In the same way, a new purpose of life is given to the person released from sin by the gospel. The saved must not give themselves again to sin and the greed of the world, but must be used in serving the Lord

who saved them and in preaching the gospel. This does not mean that one must be used by the Lord in order to be saved; it is the fruit of gratitude and faith that appears in the one already saved.

Being used by the Lord does not necessarily mean holding a conspicuous office or doing special work. Following the Word of God in the home, the workplace, and the church, not being ashamed of the gospel, and delivering the word of salvation to souls that have not yet received the remission of sin—this too is serving the Lord. Just as the colt did not display itself but revealed Jesus, whom it carried on its back, the worker of the gospel must not exalt his own ability and name but must reveal the righteousness Jesus Christ accomplished.

The multitude cried *"Hosanna"* to Jesus, but a few days later the cry to crucify Him rang through Jerusalem. A welcome born of human emotion can easily vanish when circumstances change. True faith does not stop at praising Jesus, swept along by the atmosphere; it knows and receives in the heart the meaning of the salvation He accomplished by His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. We must believe in Jesus not merely as a king who will fulfill our expectations, but as the eternal King who has saved us from sin.

This passage shows that although Jesus came in a humble form, He is in fact the Owner of all things and the eternal King who saves sinners. He entered Jerusalem not to win the cheers of men but to give His life and complete salvation. Whoever has been released from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit must receive this Jesus as the King of his heart, seek the Lord's will above the glory of the world, and live so that the gospel of the complete remission of sin is revealed through him.

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## The fig tree that was full of leaves without fruit warns against the faith that is outwardly godly but lacks the fruit of faith that God seeks

*"And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it" (Mark 11:11–14).*

After entering Jerusalem riding the colt, Jesus went to the temple. The multitude cried Hosanna to Him and expected the kingdom of David to come, but Jesus did not go at once to a palace or to the Roman government office; He sought the temple of God. For the kingdom He would establish was not a kingdom that begins with changing the world's regime, but the kingdom that brings sinners into a right relationship with God.

Jesus went into the temple and looked around at all things. This does not mean that He toured the scale and beauty of the temple like a sightseer. Jesus, the Owner of the temple, examined what was being done there. Outwardly, sacrifices and worship continued and many people came and went, but He looked to see whether that worship was truly being offered according to the will of God. The event in the next passage, in which Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple, shows what He had seen.

Because the hour was already late, Jesus went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples. That Jesus did nothing that day does not mean He approved the state of the temple. He saw

everything exactly and acted at the time He had appointed. That God does not judge sin and hypocrisy immediately does not mean that He fails to see them or permits them. While He is patient, He waits for people to turn back before the Word.

The next day, when Jesus came out from Bethany, He was hungry. Because Jesus, the Son of God, came in flesh like ours, He actually experienced hunger and weariness. He was not one who merely looked like a man; He was true man, without sin yet experiencing the weakness of the flesh like ours. And at the same time He was true God, who rules all things and judges by His word.

Jesus, seeing from afar a fig tree that had leaves, went near it to see if perhaps He would find something on it. Seen from afar, the tree was so leafy that it looked as if something could be had from it. But when He came near and looked, there was nothing except leaves. Its outward appearance looked more abundant than its actual state.

The passage states, *"for it was not the season for figs."* One might then think that Jesus unjustly cursed a tree that was not yet due to bear fruit. But this event is not a story of Jesus failing to restrain His feelings and venting anger on a tree because of hunger. Nor is a fig tree a personal being that bears moral responsibility. Jesus used the fruitless tree as a sign to teach His disciples spiritual truth.

The fig tree event lies between Jesus' looking around the temple and His cleansing of the temple. The tree with nothing but leaves, therefore, shows the state of the temple faith of that day, which had a splendid religious exterior but none of the fruit God seeks. There were the temple building and the sacrificial system and religious leaders who taught the Law, yet when the Christ whom God sent came, they failed to recognize Him and rejected Him.

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This does not mean that all the people of Israel failed to believe God. There were also those who believed Jesus as the Christ, including the disciples and Bartimaeus. The problem lay with the leaders who prided themselves on being entrusted with the temple and the Law, and who, putting forward their self-righteousness and human tradition, refused the Son of God. The Law and the sacrifices God had given pointed to the Christ who was to come and to His atonement, but they kept the exterior of the system while rejecting the Savior to whom that system pointed.

Leaves are easily seen from afar, but fruit can be confirmed only by coming near and looking. A person's religious life can be the same. Attending worship, praying, knowing the Bible well, and holding office are easily seen by others' eyes. But God does not look only at the outwardly visible activity; He examines whether the person actually believes the Word of God, and whether he has laid down his own righteousness and received the salvation God accomplished.

Fruitless faith is faith that has only a godly exterior without having solved the problem of sin. A person may think that by doing many good deeds, much service, much fasting, and many prayers of repentance he is gradually becoming righteous. But such acts cannot remove the sins written on the heart. However many lush leaves one produces outwardly, if sin remains as it is, he has not borne the fruit of salvation that God seeks.

The fruit God seeks first is that one acknowledges he is a sinner and believes in Jesus Christ, whom God sent. God gave the people of Israel the Law and the words of the prophets, and taught the atonement of sin through the sacrificial system. And at the time He promised, He sent the Savior. Therefore the fruit they were to bear was not boasting of their own religion but receiving Jesus Christ, to whom the Law and the sacrifices

pointed.

The fruit Jesus seeks is not a righteousness that man produces by his own effort and offers to God. Only when a sinner first believes the gospel and receives the life of God does true fruit come from that life. Just as hanging fruit on a dead tree does not make it a living tree, a person who has not received the remission of sin does not become born again by imitating good behavior outwardly.

Jesus came to this earth in the flesh to make sinners God's fruit-bearing people. With the baptism He received from John, He took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world. The sinless Son of God, by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, received and carried all our sins.

Carrying those sins, Jesus was crucified and shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation. Whoever believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and is born again.

In the person who has received the remission of sin and has the Holy Spirit, the fruit that pleases God begins to be borne. There appears a life that gives thanks for the grace of salvation, believes the Word of God, turns back when its own thoughts differ from the Word, loves others, and preaches the gospel. Such fruit is not a condition for obtaining salvation or the price of the remission of sin, but the result of the life already saved being revealed outwardly.

Therefore, bearing fruit must not be understood as never sinning or always acting excellently. Even the born-again have the weakness of the flesh and there are times they do wrong.

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But because the Holy Spirit dwells in their hearts, they acknowledge their wrongs before the Word and turn back, and they live by faith more and more, relying on the completed gospel. Above all, they boast not of their own righteousness but of the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished.

On the contrary, if one has much religious activity but does not believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, he can remain in a faith of leaves only. If one leaves out Jesus' baptism and speaks only of the blood of the Cross, or says that Jesus removed all sins while believing that he must supplement the remission of sin daily by his own deeds, he has not fully received the completed righteousness of God. We must not mix human merit into the gospel, but believe just as it is in the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Jesus declared to the fig tree, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again,"* and His disciples heard it. This is a solemn warning that the judgment of God is upon fruitless, outward faith. We must not misunderstand God's long patience as meaning He will never judge. Whoever keeps refusing the gospel and holding only to his own righteousness will in the end receive the judgment of his own sins.

At the same time, this event shows that in Jesus' word is the authority of the Creator and the Judge. Man's words cannot decide the life of a tree, but Jesus' word is fulfilled just as it is. His word that He will judge sin is surely fulfilled, and His promise to remit all the sins of whoever believes the gospel and to give him eternal life is also surely fulfilled. Therefore we must not depend on our own feelings and religious career but believe the word of the Lord.

The fruit of faith is not a decoration for showing others how godly we are. It is that other souls receive benefit through the life we have received through the gospel. As fruit becomes

food for people, the saved must preach the gospel they have received, serving so that those under sin and judgment may receive the remission of sin. If words and externals flourish while there is no heart that loves one soul and would preach the gospel to him, we need to look back at our own faith.

This passage teaches that God seeks not a splendid religious exterior but the heart that believes the gospel and the fruit that comes from that faith. We must not be satisfied with looking godly to people, like the fig tree with abundant leaves. We must believe in our hearts the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus solved all sins by His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection—and receive the Holy Spirit. The person born again in this way does not boast of his own righteousness but serves the gospel, and bears the fruit of sharing the food of life with other souls.

## Jesus cleansed the temple defiled by trade and greed, and revealed that the house of God is a house of prayer for all nations

*"So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city" (Mark 11:15–19).*

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The day before, Jesus had entered the temple in Jerusalem, looked around at all things, and gone out to Bethany with the twelve disciples. Entering Jerusalem again the next day, Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. This was not an act done in a moment of uncontrolled emotion; it was judgment carried out according to the will of God after He had examined exactly what was going on in the temple.

In the temple, animals for sacrifice were bought and sold, and money was changed so that people from many regions could pay the temple tax. For a person who came from afar to obtain locally an animal to offer and to change the currency he needed was not in itself entirely evil. The problem lay in the fact that such conveniences came to occupy the center of the temple, worship turned into trade, and people sought their own profit using the name of God.

The dove, in particular, was the animal the Law allowed as an offering for those who were too poor to bring a sheep or an ox. If even the dove was treated as a commodity for profit, then the very way for the poor to come to God was exploited for religious business. The sacrificial system God gave out of His mercy toward sinners was changed into a means of filling human greed.

Jesus drove out those who bought and sold, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. The gentleness of Jesus is not helplessness that says nothing while seeing sin and unrighteousness. He pities sinners, but He sternly rebukes the evil that exploits the weak in the name of God and defiles worship. In true love there is also the righteousness that names sin as sin and corrects what is wrong.

But this event must not be made a ground for an individual to justify his own anger or use violence. Jesus cleansed His own house as the Owner of the temple and the Son of God. For a person to condemn others and drive them out by force on the basis of his own feelings and judgment alone is not the same as Jesus' authoritative act. Believers must discern unrighteousness, but deal with it rightly within the written Word and within love.

Jesus also did not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. People were using the temple court not as a holy place for worshiping God but as a convenient passage for carrying goods. As the temple became familiar, they came to take its purpose and holiness lightly. Having been long in a religious environment does not necessarily mean fearing God. Because of familiarity, one can treat the Word and worship as a formality.

This event connects with the fig tree event just before it. The fig tree had abundant leaves but no fruit. The temple, too, was outwardly rich in sacrifices and religious activity, but it had none of the fruit of faith and righteousness that God seeks. The temple was full of offerings and people and money, but the will of God and mercy toward sinners had been pushed out. Like the fig tree with nothing but leaves, its exterior was splendid but it had no fruit of life.

Jesus taught from the written word: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."* The temple of God was to be not a place for the profit of a few religious leaders but a place open so that all nations might seek God and ask His grace. God wanted not only the people of Israel but also the Gentiles to come to Him and obtain salvation. The trade and clamor of the temple were blocking the place where all nations should pray to God and hear His Word.

The word about a house of prayer does not stop at meaning

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that anyone who asks earnestly in the temple will obtain whatever he wants. It carries the meaning of a place where sinners come before God, acknowledge their sin and inability, and seek God's mercy and salvation. Prayer is not a method of trading with God. Nor is it demanding blessing because one has offered much money and service. True prayer is believing the righteousness God accomplished, seeking His will, and depending on His grace.

Yet the religious leaders had made the temple a *"den of thieves."* A den of thieves is the place where robbers hide themselves after doing evil. This expression did not rebuke only the fact that trade was carried on in the temple. It exposed the hypocrisy of those who filled their greed using the name of God and the institutions of religion, and yet thought themselves safe because they were inside the temple. Religious activity can never become a hiding place that covers sin.

Today also, whoever uses the gospel for material profit or for power over people commits the same wrong. We must not speak as if the remission of sin and the grace of the Holy Spirit could be bought with money, or pressure people by saying they must give much to receive special blessing. Gaining wealth by exploiting people's fear and desperation is not serving God. The grace of God is given freely, and the gospel can never be an object of trade.

This does not mean, however, that every financial activity of a church or the sale of needed goods is unconditionally the same as the trade in the temple. To preach the gospel and run a community, honest financial management and actual costs may be needed. What matters is the purpose and the method. If money comes before the gospel, if people are deceived in God's name, if unjust burdens are laid on the weak, and if a leader's private greed is filled, that is following the way of

those who did business in the temple.

The temple of the Old Testament and its sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ, who would save sinners. The blood of animals could not remove man's sins forever; it was a shadow showing that the Son of God would accomplish a perfect atonement. But the people, absorbed in the trade of offerings, failed to recognize the true Savior to whom the sacrifices pointed. The Owner of the temple came in person, but the religious leaders tried instead to remove Him.

Jesus came in the flesh to cleanse man's heart defiled by sin. With the baptism He received from John, He took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world. As the sins of the sinner passed on to the offering in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, when John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, baptized Jesus, all our sins passed over to Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Carrying those sins, Jesus was crucified and shed His blood and died, bearing all the punishment of sin. He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing eternal salvation. Whoever believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and is born again.

Outward reform, overturning the tables of the temple, does not by itself make man's heart clean. Even if the merchants are sent out of the temple, greed and pride and self-righteousness can remain in man's heart. The way a sinner becomes truly clean is not emptying his heart by his own resolve, but believing the gospel—that Jesus bore all his sins and was judged. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the one who has received the remission of sin and makes him the temple of God.

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Whoever has received the Holy Spirit must know that his body and heart belong to God and examine what occupies them. He must look at whether wealth, honor, and the desires of the flesh have become the master, or whether Jesus Christ and the gospel stand at the center. This does not mean that wrong desires never arise after salvation. It means that when desires arise, we must discern them by the Word, lay them down, and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The chief priests and the scribes heard Jesus' words and did not acknowledge their wrongs. Instead they plotted how they might destroy Him. They regarded guarding their own authority and interests as more important than the holiness of the temple. If, when one's wrong is exposed by the Word of God, he does not turn back but tries to remove the one who delivered the Word, he serves himself in reality while serving God with his lips.

The reason they feared Jesus was also not that they believed He is the Son of God, but that the multitude was astonished at His teaching. They feared people's reactions and the shaking of their own position more than God. Religion that is conscious of people's eyes speaks of God when it is advantageous, but when the truth touches its desires, it can oppose the truth.

That the multitude was astonished at Jesus' teaching also does not immediately mean that they were saved. Being amazed at the Word and rating a sermon as excellent is different from believing the gospel with the heart. A person can admire Jesus' authority and teaching while laying down neither his sin nor his own righteousness. To be saved, one must not remain in the seat of evaluating Jesus but receive the righteousness of God He accomplished as one's own salvation.

This passage teaches that serving God must not degenerate into a religious business that fills man's greed. The house of

God must be a house of prayer where all nations hear the gospel, receive the remission of sin, and pray. The church must be not a place that exalts wealth and power and human names, but a place that clearly preaches the salvation Jesus accomplished by His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

Whoever has been made clean by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit must not use the grace he has received to seek profit and position. The gospel is not a commodity sold for profit but the news of life received freely. Believers must guard the heart in which the Holy Spirit dwells with the Word, and give themselves to helping souls who have not yet received the remission of sin come to God, rather than to their own gain. This is the fruit of faith lived according to the will of God, who desires His house to be a house of prayer for all nations.

## The prayer that believes God is not a means of fulfilling one's own desires but comes from faith that trusts God's Word and His completed salvation

*"Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. 'And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your*

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*Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:20–26).*

The morning after Jesus said to the fruitless fig tree, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again,"* the disciples saw that the tree had dried up from the roots. It was not that its leaves had merely begun to wilt; it was dried up from the roots, the source of its life. This shows that Jesus' word did not end as a mere warning but was fulfilled just as He spoke it.

The fig tree had abundant leaves but no fruit. This was a sign representing the state of the temple of that day, where sacrifices and religious activity were outwardly lively, but the fruit of faith and righteousness that God seeks was absent. That the story of the fig tree is placed around the event of Jesus cleansing the temple also shows this relation. However splendid the exterior of the temple and its religious zeal, if the Son of God is rejected, no fruit of life can be borne.

That the fig tree dried up from the roots shows that God's judgment is not a matter of briefly mending the outward appearance. A person can correct a few visible behaviors and make his religious appearance tidy, but unless the root of sin is dealt with, he cannot become righteous before God. The sin deep in man's heart cannot be removed by his resolve or discipline; it can be solved only through the salvation God has ordained.

Peter, remembering what Jesus had said the day before, said, *"Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."* He confirmed with his eyes the result of the word and was amazed. But Jesus did not let their attention stay on the fig tree itself; He said, *"Have faith in God."* The core the disciples

had to learn was not to gaze at a remarkable miracle but to believe God, who did that work, and His word.

In the word *"Have faith in God,"* the object of faith is God. Faith is not strongly cultivating a conviction inside one's own heart or repeatedly imagining a desired outcome. Nor is it believing in how strong one's own faith is. True faith is knowing who God is—He who does not lie and fulfills what He has spoken—and depending on His character and His promises.

A person can be confident that a desired result will come true and call that faith. But fixing on something God has not promised, according to one's own desire, and then demanding that it surely be fulfilled is not faith. Faith is not commanding God to follow one's own will; it is accepting that God's will is better and more right than one's own thoughts. When we pray also, we must first seek God's will and His Word.

Jesus said that whoever says to the mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, and does not doubt in his heart, it will be done. Here the mountain represents a problem so great and impossible-looking that man cannot move it by his own strength. This word does not teach a technique by which a believer can move actual mountains at will by speaking. It teaches that however great the obstacle to what God has purposed, it can be solved by the power of God.

The power that moves mountains does not come from man's mental strength or the force of his words. Nor does it mean that when a believer commands, the universe obeys his will. The One who works the power is God, and man prays depending on Him. When we preach the gospel and serve souls according to the will God delights in, even if we meet obstacles hard for human strength to cross, we must not be discouraged but must ask God's help.

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The word *"whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them"* must not be used like a blank check that guarantees every human desire. God is not our servant but the Father, who governs His children with wisdom and love. If what a child asks is harmful or does not agree with God's will, His not granting it as asked is also love. The method and the timing of the answer are likewise decided by God.

To believe that we have received is to trust that God has heard our prayer and is working according to His best will even when nothing is yet visible. What God has clearly promised we may be assured of as though already received. But we must not insist only on the time and method we ourselves have fixed and then condemn ourselves for lacking faith when it does not turn out so. True faith keeps on praying according to the Word while entrusting the outcome to God.

In particular, God's promise concerning the remission of sin is not uncertain. The sinner does not need to wait vaguely, wondering whether God will accomplish salvation. For Jesus Christ has already completed the work of salvation by bearing sin and being judged. A person must not look for the evidence of the remission of sin in his own feelings, but must hear the word of the gospel God accomplished and believe it just as it is.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world. And carrying those sins, He was crucified, shed His blood and died, receiving all the punishment of sin in our place. He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation. This is not something we must keep pleading for Him to accomplish in the future; it is the fact of salvation God has already accomplished.

Whoever believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism Jesus received from John the

Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. It is not that one becomes righteous only when he feels his sins have vanished. Even when feelings waver and our lack comes into view, the word that God has removed all sins through Jesus does not change. Saving faith trusts the Word of God more than one's own feelings.

Whoever believes this gospel receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and prays calling God Father. Prayer is not an act of persuading God in order to obtain the remission of sin; it is the fellowship in which one who has already become God's child seeks the Father's will and help. The saved must not try to solve difficulties by their own strength alone, but must tell them to God and ask for the wisdom and power needed to serve the gospel.

After teaching the prayer of faith, Jesus spoke at once about forgiveness. The word *"whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him"* means that we must not hold together in one heart faith toward God and hatred toward people. If one who has received great grace from God holds on to a brother's fault to the end and seeks revenge, he has forgotten how great the grace of the remission of sin he received is.

The act of forgiving others is not the price paid to receive the remission of sin from God. Nor does it mean that God saves us as a reward for forgiving many people. The wages of sin were paid only by Jesus Christ, with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The sinner receives remission of sins freely by believing this gospel, and forgiving others is the fruit that flows from the grace he has first received.

If someone believes he has received the remission of sin from God and yet acts mercilessly toward others, he must look

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back at whether that faith has actually taken its place in his heart. God has freely removed the debt of sin we could never repay. Whoever knows this grace entrusts to God his anger and vengeance toward the one who wronged him and chooses the way of forgiveness. The Holy Spirit helps us overcome the feelings of the flesh and treat the other person with the grace of the gospel.

Forgiveness is not acknowledging a wrong as right or dressing up the harm as if it had never happened. Nor does it mean that a person who has suffered crime and violence must immediately return to a dangerous relationship. One can seek necessary protection and due responsibility while laying down personal revenge and hatred and entrusting them to God's judgment. For trust to be rebuilt in a relationship, sincere apology and repentance, and enough time, may be needed.

The word *"that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses"* does not mean that man earns eternal remission by his own deeds apart from Jesus' redemption. Jesus already called God *"your Father."* This word solemnly warns that a child who has received God's grace cannot enjoy right fellowship with the Father while refusing to forgive others. Hatred harbored in the heart hinders prayer and resists the leading of the Holy Spirit.

When the saved person has wronged someone, he must honestly acknowledge his act and apologize. And when he has been wronged, he must remember the gospel he received and choose forgiveness. This is not easily done by the strength of the flesh alone. But the more deeply we believe the grace that God has removed all our sins through Jesus, the more we show mercy rather than holding on to another's faults and condemning him.

The judgment of the fig tree, the prayer of faith, and

forgiveness are not separate topics. Fruitless faith is faith that prays outwardly while not believing the Son of God, harboring greed and hatred in the heart. Living faith, on the contrary, receives the salvation God accomplished, depends on Him in difficulty, and shows the grace it has received to others. The fruit of faith is revealed in prayer, love, and forgiveness.

This passage teaches that faith is not a power that turns one's desires into reality but trust in God and His Word. Whoever believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit believes without doubting the fact that all his sins have already been removed by Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. He prays depending on God as Father, and is not discouraged even when a mountain-like problem blocks the work of the gospel. And remembering the grace of the remission of sin received freely, he lives forgiving others with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## By asking where the authority of John the Baptist came from, Jesus exposed the unbelief of the religious leaders who opposed Him

*"Then they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to Him. And they said to Him, 'By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?' But Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one question; then answer Me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say,*

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*‘From men’’—they feared the people, for all counted John to have been a prophet indeed. So they answered and said to Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’” (Mark 11:27–33).*

Jesus entered Jerusalem again and was walking in the temple. Just before this, He had driven out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He had also rebuked them because the temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations, but people had made it a den of thieves. Now the religious leaders of the temple came to Jesus and made an issue of the authority of His action.

Those who came to Jesus were the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. These were the men who held authority over the temple sacrifices, the teaching of the Law, and the religious life of the people. When Jesus corrected the order of the temple and taught the people without their permission, they demanded, *“By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?”* In their question lay the intention of investigating and stopping His action.

Asking about the source of authority is not always wrong in itself. Since there are those who teach falsehood while putting forward the name of God, it is necessary to discern who teaches on what ground. But these men did not ask in order to confirm and believe the truth. They had already seen Jesus’ words and His power and knew the corruption of the temple, yet they refused to acknowledge Jesus, who had challenged their authority.

They thought that since they managed the temple, the authority to teach in it or to correct its order must also be granted by them. But the true Owner of the temple was not

they but God. Jesus is the Son of God and the very substance of the salvation to which the temple pointed. Therefore He was not one who could enter the temple only by receiving delegated authority from men; He possessed the original authority to look after His Father's house and to cleanse it.

Jesus did not give them a direct answer at once but first asked one thing: *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?"* This was not Jesus changing the subject to avoid answering. It was because the mission of John the Baptist and the authority of Jesus were joined together within the one plan of salvation God was accomplishing.

John the Baptist was not a man who became a prophet by himself. He was the messenger God sent to prepare the way of the Christ. In the wilderness he preached repentance to the people, baptized with water, and testified of the One mightier than he who was coming after him. His ministry was not for winning people's popularity or founding a new religious group, but for making the people realize they were sinners and preparing them to receive Jesus Christ.

The baptism John the Baptist gave the people was a baptism of repentance, leading them to acknowledge that they were sinners before God and to turn back. That ceremony itself did not remove all a person's sins forever. It played the preparatory role of making people realize their sin and their condition of facing judgment, and of leading them to wait for Jesus Christ, who would actually bear and remove sin.

But the mission of John the Baptist did not end with giving the people the baptism of repentance. He had to baptize Jesus, who came out to the Jordan River. Jesus is without sin, but with the baptism He received from John, who was raised up as the representative of mankind, He took upon His own body the sins of everyone in the world. Thus He fulfilled the

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righteousness of God that saves sinners and became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Therefore, the question *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men?"* does not stop at the question of how to evaluate the individual John the Baptist. It was the question of whether they accepted that God had sent John the Baptist, and that his testifying of Jesus and baptizing Him belonged to God's plan of salvation. If they acknowledged that John's mission came from heaven, they had to acknowledge that Jesus, of whom he testified, is the Christ sent by God.

When Jesus was baptized and came up from the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and from heaven came the voice testifying that He is God's beloved Son. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit showed that Jesus' baptism was a work accomplished within God's plan of salvation. Therefore Jesus' authority came not from the appointment or approval of the religious leaders but from the Father in heaven.

Hearing Jesus' question, the religious leaders calculated which answer would be advantageous to them rather than seeking the truth. If they answered that John's baptism was from heaven, it was plain that Jesus would ask, *"Why then did you not believe him?"* To acknowledge that God had sent John the Baptist while rejecting his cry of repentance and his testimony about Jesus did not hold together.

Nor could they say that John's baptism came from men, for they feared the people's reaction, since all regarded John as a true prophet. They did not judge what was true before God; they considered which answer would protect their position and safety. They feared the people rather than God and watched public opinion rather than the truth.

Changing one's position on the truth for fear of people's

evaluation is not faith. A thing does not automatically become true because many believe it, nor false because many oppose it. Right and wrong must be judged in the light of the Word of God. The religious leaders were the teachers of the Word, yet they refused to be judged by the Word themselves.

In the end they answered, *"We do not know."* It was not that they lacked material for judgment. They pretended not to know because they knew that whatever they answered, their unbelief and hypocrisy would be exposed. It was a false neutrality for evading responsibility. When one must decide whether to believe or reject before the evidence God has sent, hiding behind "I do not know" can itself be a choice that rejects the truth.

Jesus said to them, *"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."* This does not mean that Jesus could not explain His authority. He had already given sufficient evidence through John the Baptist, and He would not explain further to those who deliberately refused to believe. To the person who questions in order to win an argument, without any heart to know and obey the truth, no amount of explanation produces faith.

Jesus' authority was revealed clearly in His words and His works as well. With His word of authority He cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised the dead. He revealed the authority to remit sins, and as the Owner of the temple He rebuked corrupt religion. But the most important authority is the authority to bear all the sinner's sins, receive the judgment in his place, and save him forever.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took over all our sins—past, present, and future. And carrying those sins, He was crucified and shed His blood and died, bearing all the wages and the judgment of sin. He was buried

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and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation. This is the purpose for which God sent John the Baptist and for which Jesus was baptized by him.

Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, regardless of his good deeds or religious position. To the one who believes the gospel, God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift and makes him His child. Salvation is not achieved by the approval of a man-made religious system; it is obtained when one receives into his heart the word of salvation God has established.

Even the high positions of chief priest, scribe, and elder could not save them. Rather, because they trusted their own knowledge and authority, they could not receive the testimony of John the Baptist and the words of Jesus. On the other hand, those who acknowledged their sin and inability heard John's cry and came to Jesus. Before God, what matters is not religious career but the heart that admits one's own sinfulness and believes the gospel.

Today also, church office or theological knowledge cannot take the place of the gospel. However long one has lived the life of faith and however many people one has taught, if he does not believe the fact that all his sins were completely removed by Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, his sins remain as they are. On the contrary, even one despised in the world, if he acknowledges his sin and believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receives the complete remission of sin.

Moreover, believing in Jesus' authority does not end with calling Him Lord with one's lips. We must exalt the way of salvation He has spoken above our own thoughts. If one receives the blood of the Cross but rejects as unimportant the

fact that Jesus bore sins through His baptism, he has not fully received what God accomplished through John the Baptist. We must believe the testimony of the water, the blood, and the Spirit as one salvation.

The authority of the one who preaches the gospel also does not come from titles or popularity. There is spiritual authority when he rightly delivers the written Word of God and the gospel Jesus Christ completed. A leader must not press people to submit to his own thoughts, but must help each person confirm the Word of God and believe in Jesus. If human authority is made absolute, one can fall into the same wrong as the religious leaders of that day.

This passage shows that not believing because one does not know the truth is different from refusing to know in order to keep one's position. The religious leaders asked Jesus about the source of His authority, but they would not acknowledge that the authority of John the Baptist came from heaven. They calculated people's reactions instead of the answer God had given, and in the end hid behind the words that they did not know.

The sinner must not remain in an ambiguous attitude before the mission of John the Baptist and the saving work of Jesus. God sent John the Baptist to have the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus, and Jesus carried those sins, was judged on the Cross, and rose again. Whoever believes this righteousness of God in his heart receives the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit, but for the one who rejects it, putting forward his own thoughts and religious authority, sin remains as it is. True faith does not worry about people's reactions but receives just as it is the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God has accomplished. ✉

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# Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 11

## [Question] 1. What is the importance of the events recorded in Mark chapter 11?

Mark chapter 11 shows that with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the final stage of His public ministry began in earnest. Jesus had now finished the ministry of teaching through Galilee and the various regions, and He entered openly into Jerusalem, where He would die on the Cross and rise from the dead and complete salvation. This chapter is therefore an important turning point at which Jesus' final week of suffering begins and the full confrontation with the religious leaders sets in.

Jesus entered Jerusalem riding a colt on which no one had yet sat. The multitude spread their clothes and branches on the road and cried out, *"Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* This shows that Jesus came as the Christ and the King who would establish the kingdom of David. But by riding not a warhorse but a colt, Jesus showed that He is not a king who conquers with the world's force and power, but the King of peace, who humbly gives Himself to save people.

The event in which Jesus cursed the fruitless fig tree is also important. The tree with lush leaves but no fruit represents the faith that has a splendid religious appearance outwardly but fails to bear the fruit of faith and righteousness that God desires. That the tree dried up from the roots according to Jesus' word shows that God's judgment comes upon the life that has only

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outward religious form without the true fruit of faith.

The cleansing of the temple, recorded between the two scenes of the fig tree, makes the meaning still clearer. Jesus drove out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. For the temple, which God gave as a house of prayer for all nations, had turned into a den of thieves for the greed and profit of the religious leaders. Jesus, as the Owner of the temple, judged the corrupted religion and made it plain that true worship must set God and souls, not human profit, at its center.

To the disciples who saw the fig tree dried up from the roots, Jesus said, *"Have faith in God."* The life of faith begins not with man's ability and forms but with the faith that believes the Word of God. He taught them to pray in faith and not to doubt that God would answer, and not to keep holding what they had against others while praying, but to be at peace with one another. True faith is confessed not with the lips only but appears in the fruit of prayer, obedience, and peace.

At the end of the chapter, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders asked Jesus by what authority He did these things. Jesus asked in return whether the baptism of John the Baptist was from heaven or from men. Because they calculated people's reactions and their own position rather than seeking the will of God, they could not answer. This dispute exposes the hardness of the religious leaders, who would not acknowledge that Jesus' authority came from God, and shows that their conflict, seeking to kill Him, was deepening.

At the center of all these events stands Jesus' work of salvation. Jesus entered Jerusalem bearing all the sins of all mankind, which He had taken on with the baptism He received from John. And carrying those sins, He received the judgment

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of sin on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead, completing the whole of salvation. He gave Himself to solve the more fundamental problem of sin and death, rather than the political kingdom the multitude expected.

The importance of Mark chapter 11, therefore, lies in the fact that Jesus entered Jerusalem as the humble King and the Owner of the temple, judged fruitless, formal faith and corrupted religion, and taught true faith in God and true prayer. At the same time, it is very important in that, with the Cross ahead, Jesus' divine authority and the unbelief of the religious leaders stand in sharp contrast as the final course of the work of salvation begins.

## [Question] 2. Give a general outline of Jesus' week of suffering, which begins from Mark chapter 11.

From Mark chapter 11 on, the record covers the last week Jesus spent before dying on the Cross. This period is called the 'Passion Week'; it begins with the entry into Jerusalem and continues through the final teachings in the temple and the disputes with the religious leaders, the Last Supper and the prayer of Gethsemane, the arrest and trials, the death of the Cross and the burial, and then the resurrection from the dead. Mark records in great detail this final period in which Jesus' work of salvation is completed.

On Sunday, the first day of the traditional Passion Week, Jesus came to Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. He entered Jerusalem riding a colt on which no one had yet sat, and the multitude spread their clothes and branches on the road, crying Hosanna. This was the event in which Jesus openly revealed that He is the promised Christ and King. But

by riding a colt rather than a warhorse, He showed that He came not as a king who dominates the world by force, but as the King who humbly sacrifices Himself to save. Jesus went into the temple, looked around at all things, and went out to Bethany with the twelve disciples (11:1–11).

On Monday, the second day, as Jesus went from Bethany toward Jerusalem, He cursed a fig tree that had nothing but lush leaves without fruit. Then He went into the temple, drove out those who bought and sold, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He rebuked them for making the house of God, where all nations should pray, a den of thieves for religious profit. The fruitless fig tree and the corrupted temple show that religion whose outside is splendid but which lacks the true fruit of faith and righteousness receives the judgment of God. From this event the chief priests and the scribes began to plot more concretely how to kill Jesus (11:12–19).

On Tuesday, the third day, the disciples saw that the fig tree Jesus had cursed was dried up from the roots. Jesus taught them to have faith in God, not to doubt, and to believe that they had received what they prayed for and asked. He also said that when they had anything against anyone, they must be at peace. Afterward, in the temple, Jesus faced the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders who challenged His authority. With the parable of the wicked vinedressers He exposed the sin of the religious leaders, and He answered the question of paying taxes to Caesar, the dispute about the resurrection, and the question about the greatest commandment. He also warned against the hypocrisy of the scribes and valued highly the two mites of the poor widow (11:20–12:44).

After coming out of the temple, Jesus taught Peter, James, John, and Andrew on the Mount of Olives about what would

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take place. He spoke of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the deception of false christs, wars and disasters, the preaching of the gospel and the persecutions the disciples would receive, and the coming again of the Son of Man. But His purpose was not to have them calculate the exact time; He exhorted them to keep the faith to the end and watch (13:1–37).

With the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread ahead, the chief priests and the scribes looked for a way to seize and kill Jesus secretly, so that there would be no uproar among the people. In Bethany, a woman poured very costly fragrant oil on Jesus' head. People rebuked it as a waste, but Jesus said that she had done a beautiful thing, preparing His body beforehand for burial. Judas Iscariot, on the other hand, went to the chief priests, seeking an opportunity to betray Him. One person broke what was precious and offered it to the Lord; the other tried to sell the Lord to get money (14:1–11).

On the evening of the day the Passover meal was prepared, Jesus shared the last supper with the twelve disciples. During the meal He said that one of them would betray Him, and giving them the bread and the cup, He taught them of His body and of the blood of the covenant shed for many. He also foretold that Peter would deny Him three times. Then He went to Gethsemane, and being greatly troubled and deeply distressed, He prayed. Even in the agony of the flesh that wished to avoid the cup of suffering, Jesus asked that not His own will but the Father's will be done (14:12–42).

That night Judas Iscariot came with an armed crowd and handed Jesus over with a kiss. Jesus was arrested and taken to the house of the high priest, and the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes sought false testimony to put Him to death. When Jesus declared that He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, they condemned Him for blasphemy. Meanwhile

Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus, and when the rooster crowed the second time, he remembered Jesus' word and wept (14:43–72).

At dawn on Friday, the religious leaders handed Jesus over to the Roman governor Pilate. Though Pilate knew that Jesus had done nothing deserving death, he released Barabbas to satisfy the crowd, had Jesus scourged, and delivered Him to be crucified. The soldiers put a purple robe and a crown of thorns on Him, spat on Him, and mocked Him. Jesus was crucified at Golgotha, hung on the Cross from the third hour to the ninth hour, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, and the centurion who watched confessed that Jesus was the Son of God. Joseph of Arimathea took His body down, wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in a tomb hewn out of rock (15:1–47).

On Saturday, the Sabbath, Jesus' body lay in the tomb. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome prepared spices to anoint His body. To human eyes everything seemed finished, but the promise of the resurrection that Jesus had spoken beforehand would surely be fulfilled.

At dawn on Sunday, the first day after the Sabbath, when the women went to the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away and Jesus' body was not there. A young man clothed in white told them that Jesus, who had been crucified, had risen, and told them to tell His disciples and Peter that He was going before them into Galilee. Jesus' death did not end in defeat; by the resurrection from the dead, the salvation that overcame sin and death was completed (chapter 16).

All the events of the Passion Week show that Jesus did not suffer an accidental political sacrifice, but gave Himself according to the will of God to save mankind. Jesus entered Jerusalem bearing all the sins of all mankind through the

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baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, shed His blood and died, and then rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel of the water, the blood, and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, is born again, and obtains eternal life.

The Passion Week, therefore, is the period in which Jesus, who entered as the humble King, judged fruitless religion and taught His final words, and then gave His life as a ransom, bore the judgment of sin, and rose from the dead, completing salvation. This is the event in which *"the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,"* which the whole Gospel of Mark proclaims, reaches its climax.

## [Question] 3. Mark 11:1—where did Jesus arrive after finishing His preaching journey through the region of Perea?

Having finished His ministry in the region of Perea, Jesus arrived at Bethphage and Bethany, on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem.

Bethphage and Bethany were villages near the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. From here Jesus sent two disciples to bring a colt, and riding it, He entered Jerusalem.

## [Question] 4. Mark 11:2—to which village did Jesus send the two disciples?

Jesus sent the two disciples to the village opposite them.

Mark does not state the name of that village specifically.

But since Jesus and His disciples had come to Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives, we can know that it was one of the villages in that vicinity.

## [Question] 5. Mark 11:2—why did Jesus send the two disciples to the village opposite?

Jesus sent the two disciples to loose and bring the colt tied in the opposite village, on which no one had yet sat.

Jesus intended to enter Jerusalem riding that colt. Through this He revealed that He is not a king who rules by the world's force but the Christ who came in a humble form.

Jesus also knew beforehand what colt the disciples would find when they entered the village. This shows the divine knowledge and authority of Jesus, who knew what would happen and prepared His entry into Jerusalem according to His own will.

## [Question] 6. Mark 11:3—what did Jesus tell the disciples to say to anyone who asked why they were taking the colt?

Jesus said that if anyone asked why they were loosing the colt, they should say, "*The Lord has need of it.*" Then, He said, the man would send the colt at once.

This word shows that Jesus knew in advance even the colt's owner and the response he would show, and that He was sovereignly preparing what was needed for His entry into Jerusalem.

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## [Question] 7. Mark 11:4–6—what result did the disciples obtain by obeying the command to bring the colt?

When the disciples went to the opposite village as Jesus had said, they found a colt tied by the door outside on the street. As they loosed it, some of those standing there asked, *"What are you doing, loosing the colt?"*

The disciples answered as Jesus had commanded, *"The Lord has need of it."* Then the people did not stop them any longer but let them take the colt. What Jesus had said beforehand was fulfilled just so.

The command to loose and bring another person's colt was hard to understand and could have been misunderstood by people, but the disciples believed Jesus' word above their own thoughts and obeyed. As a result they confirmed for themselves that Jesus knew and had prepared everything in advance, and they were used in preparing the Lord's entry into Jerusalem.

## [Question] 8. Mark 11:7—what was distinctive about the donkey Jesus rode when He entered Jerusalem?

The donkey Jesus rode was not a full-grown donkey but a young colt, and one on which no one had yet sat.

Ordinarily a colt that has never been ridden is untamed and hard for a person to ride. But Jesus rode that colt into Jerusalem. This shows that all creatures are under the authority of Jesus.

Moreover, that Jesus rode a young colt rather than a warhorse reveals that He is not a king of the world who puts

forward force and majesty, but the Christ who came in humility and peace.

## [Question] 9. Mark 11:7—what did the disciples do after bringing the colt to Jesus?

After bringing the colt to Jesus, the disciples laid their own clothes on it. Then Jesus sat on the colt.

The disciples' laying their clothes on the colt was an act of preparing a seat like a saddle so that Jesus could ride comfortably. It was also a scene of exalting Jesus as King and serving His entry into Jerusalem.

## [Question] 10. Mark 11:8—how did the people who met Jesus as He entered Jerusalem act?

Many people spread their own clothes on the road where Jesus was passing, and others spread leafy branches they had cut down in the fields.

Spreading clothes and branches on the road was a sign of receiving and exalting Jesus as an honored king. The people welcomed Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, expecting that He was the King who would restore the kingdom of David.

But rather than fully realizing that Jesus is the Christ who saves from sin and death, many were expecting Him as a king who would free them from the rule of Rome and establish the political kingdom of Israel.

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## [Question] 11. Mark 11:9–10—what did the multitude going before and following Jesus cry out?

Those who went before Jesus and those who followed cried out as follows.

*"Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

*"Hosanna"* is originally a word carrying the meaning of a plea to save, and here it was used as praise and acclamation toward the King who comes to save. The multitude welcomed Jesus, exalting Him as the One who comes in the name of the Lord and the King who would establish the kingdom of David.

## [Question] 12. Mark 11:11—where did Jesus go after entering Jerusalem?

After entering Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple.

Jesus went into the temple and looked around at all things. But since the hour was already late, He did not do anything immediately that day; He left Jerusalem with the twelve disciples and went to Bethany.

## [Question] 13. Mark 11:12—what was Jesus' physical condition when He came out from Bethany the next day?

When Jesus came out from Bethany, He was hungry. That is, He was feeling hunger in His body.

This shows that Jesus, though the Son of God, came to this

earth in a real human body and experienced human needs such as hunger and weariness.

## [Question] 14. Mark 11:13—where did the hungry Jesus go to find fruit?

Jesus saw from afar a fig tree that had leaves, and went near to see what was on it.

But the fig tree had nothing except leaves, and the passage records that it was not the season for figs.

## [Question] 15. Mark 11:14—what did Jesus say to the fig tree that had nothing but leaves and no fruit?

To the fig tree that had no fruit, Jesus said, *"Let no one eat fruit from you ever again."* The disciples also heard this word Jesus spoke.

This word was not simply an emotional curse on one tree; it was a symbolic act showing that judgment follows the faith that, however lush its leaves look outwardly, has none of the fruit of faith and righteousness that God desires.

## [Question] 16. Mark 11:15—what was the situation in and around the temple in Jesus' day?

In Jesus' day, around the temple in Jerusalem there gathered those who bought and sold animals for the sacrifices and those who changed money. People who came from afar had to obtain locally the oxen, sheep, and doves they would

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offer, and had to change their money into the currency accepted by the temple to pay the temple tax and the price of offerings.

Such things could have begun as conveniences to help worshipers who came from far away offer their sacrifices. But in Jesus' day, trade and money changing had come inside the temple itself and had become a matter of gaining profit by using religion. Inside the temple, the sounds of buying and selling, the changing of money, and the animals being sold as offerings were hindering prayer and worship.

The passage records that there were people buying and selling in the temple, and that the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves were set there. The words that follow show that people were even passing through the temple carrying wares, as if it were a thoroughfare. The holy place, where God should be feared and prayer offered, was being used like a marketplace and a shortcut.

The dove, in particular, was an animal that even those without much means could offer. That even such offerings had become commodities for profit shows that the faith and the sacrifices of the poor were also being used for money-making. The passage does not state the specific prices and methods of all the trade, but Jesus' word calling the place a *"den of thieves"* reveals that the trade of the temple had gone beyond providing convenience and was stained with greed and unjust profit.

The temple of that day, therefore, was outwardly magnificent, with many sacrifices and religious activities under way, but inside it money and human profit came before God and souls. Like the fig tree that was lush with leaves but had no fruit, its religious forms looked abundant while the fruit of faith and prayer and righteousness that God desires was lacking.

## [Question] 17. Mark 11:15—what did Jesus do when He saw those buying and selling in the temple?

Jesus drove out those who were buying and selling things in the temple. He also overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

Jesus did not warn with words only; He decisively stopped the practices that had made the temple a place of trade and greed. This was not violent behavior out of personal feeling, but holy anger and judgment toward the sin of defiling the house of God and gaining profit by using worship.

This act shows that Jesus is the true Owner of the temple, and that He does not tolerate turning the service of God into a means for human greed and profit.

## [Question] 18. What did Jesus forbid, as recorded in Mark 11:16?

Jesus forbade anyone to carry wares through the temple.

At that time some people did not regard the temple as the holy place of worship and prayer to God, but used it like a shortcut or a passage for daily life, carrying goods through it. By stopping such behavior, Jesus taught that the temple is not a place for human convenience and trade but the place where God is feared and worshiped.

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## [Question] 19. Mark 11:17—what is the original nature of the temple of which Jesus spoke?

Jesus said that the temple was originally to be *"a house of prayer for all nations."*

The temple was to be not a place for the religious power and profit of particular people, but the place where people of all nations come to God, pray, worship, and hear His Word. Coming to God must not be hindered because one is poor or a Gentile.

But the religious leaders and the merchants of that day had turned the temple into a place of trade and greed and made it a *"den of thieves."* Jesus rebuked this and taught that the temple must be restored as the holy place of prayer and worship, with God and souls at its center.

## [Question] 20. Mark 11:17—what did Jesus call the temple that had turned into a place of trade?

To those who had made the temple a place of trade, Jesus said in rebuke, *"you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

The temple was to be the house where all nations pray to God, but they used the sacrifices and the worship to gain their own profit and laid burdens on the poor. Jesus was pointing out that their conduct was not mere trade but greed and robbery carried on under the name of God and religion.

## [Question] 21. Mark 11:18—who plotted how they might destroy Jesus?

Those who plotted how they might destroy Jesus were the chief priests and the scribes.

Hearing that Jesus had driven out the merchants in the temple and rebuked their wrongs openly, they sought a way to kill Him. But since all the multitude was astonished at His teaching, they feared the people's reaction and could not act at once.

## [Question] 22. Mark 11:19—where did Jesus go after cleansing the temple?

When evening came, Jesus went out of the city of Jerusalem with His disciples.

Verse 19 does not directly name the place where He stayed that night. But from what precedes and follows, we can see that after His ministry in Jerusalem, Jesus went outside the city and stayed in the direction of Bethany.

## [Question] 23. Mark 11:20–21—in what state was the fig tree Jesus had cursed the next day?

The next morning, as Jesus and His disciples passed by, the fig tree was completely dried up from the roots. Seeing this, Peter remembered what Jesus had said the day before and said, *"Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away."*

That the fig tree dried up from the roots shows that Jesus'

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word was fulfilled just as He spoke it, reaching not only the outer parts but the very source of the tree's life. And the sight of the tree that had only lush leaves without fruit teaches that the state of having outward religion without the fruit of faith that God seeks comes at last to judgment.

## [Question] 24. Mark 11:22–23—what did Jesus teach the disciples about faith when they saw the withered fig tree?

To the disciples astonished at the withered fig tree, Jesus first said, *"Have faith in God."* The object of faith is not human ability or will but the living God, and true faith begins with receiving into the heart what God has spoken.

Then Jesus taught that whoever says to this mountain, Be removed and be cast into the sea, believing that what he says will be done and not doubting in his heart, it will be so. Here the *"mountain"* signifies not only a literal mountain but also a great and difficult problem that human strength cannot move. This word, therefore, does not mean that a believer can command whatever he wants according to his own desires; it means that when we believe and depend on God's will and Word, God can accomplish even what is impossible for human ability.

That the fig tree dried up from the roots according to Jesus' word shows that the Word of God carries the authority that is surely fulfilled. The disciples were to believe God and His Word rather than reckoning the visible circumstances or their own abilities. Faith is not being confident of a desired result without any ground; it is receiving into the heart, without doubting, the fact that what God has spoken will surely be fulfilled.

## [Question] 25. Mark 11:24—what is the way of answered prayer of which Jesus spoke?

Jesus said, *"whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."* The way of answered prayer, therefore, is to ask God clearly for what is needed and to believe that God has heard and will give it. It means believing that we have already received, depending on God's power and faithfulness, even before the result appears before our eyes.

This faith is not forcing conviction on oneself or insisting only on the result one wants. It is believing the fact that God lives, that He is almighty, and that His word is surely fulfilled. If we calculate only our own ability and the visible circumstances, we become discouraged before what looks impossible; but the believer brings that problem to God, prays, and depends on God to work.

Prayer, therefore, does not stop at the act of stating a wish. Even after entrusting to God what we have asked, we are not dragged about by doubt and circumstances; we believe the God who answers, wait, and act in faith. The method and the timing of the answer belong to God, but the believer must live in thanksgiving, believing that God will accomplish it in the most fitting way.

## [Question] 26. Mark 11:25—what heart is required of the one who would receive the remission of his trespasses from God?

Whoever would receive from God the remission of his trespasses must, when he prays, lay down the grudge, the

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hatred, and the resentment he holds against others, and have a heart that forgives them. One must not seek God's mercy while holding on to and condemning the faults of the person who wronged him.

*"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25).*

The ground on which we can forgive others lies not in our generous character or strong will. It is because we have first received from God the grace of the remission of sin beyond measure. Jesus received all our sins passed on to Him with the baptism He received from John, carried those sins and was judged, shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from the dead, saving us from all sins. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit believes that the debt of sin he could never repay to God has been completely canceled by the Lord's grace.

Therefore the righteous person who has received the remission of sin looks first at the great mercy he received from God, before looking at the faults another has committed against him. Because he believes the grace of the Lord, who pitied him and remitted all his sins, he lays aside hatred and the desire for revenge toward his brother, and forgives, hoping that he may turn back and be restored.

To forgive does not mean acknowledging the other person's wrong as right or overlooking unrighteousness. It is entrusting the final judgment to God and casting away the heart that hates the person or wishes his destruction. It is also pitying his soul and asking that he may stand rightly in the grace of God.

This word does not mean that the act of forgiving others becomes a condition or price for obtaining salvation. The remission of sin is received by believing in the heart the gospel

of the water and the Spirit that Jesus Christ completed. Forgiving one's brother is not a merit of salvation but the fruit of faith and mercy that appears in the heart of the one who believes God's perfect remission of sin.

## [Question] 27. Mark 11:27–28—what did the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders demand of Jesus?

When Jesus entered Jerusalem again and was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came and demanded, *"By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority to do these things?"*

They were demanding that He state by whose authority He had driven out the merchants in the temple and taught the people, and who had given Him that authority. This was not a pure question for learning the truth, but a question meant to find fault with Jesus, who had challenged their religious authority.

## [Question] 28. Mark 11:29–30—with what question did Jesus respond to the Jewish leaders who asked about His authority?

Jesus said He would ask them one thing, and that if they answered, He would also tell them by what authority He did these things. Then He asked, *"The baptism of John—was it from heaven or from men? Answer Me."*

This question meant: judge whether the ministry of John the Baptist came from God or began merely from man. If they acknowledged that John the Baptist was a prophet sent by God,

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they had to acknowledge that the authority of Jesus, of whom he testified, also came from God.

## [Question] 29. Mark 11:31–33—how did the leaders answer Jesus' question, and why were they in difficulty?

Receiving Jesus' question, the Jewish leaders reasoned among themselves. If they answered that John's baptism was from heaven, Jesus would ask, *"Why then did you not believe him?"* And if they answered that it was from men, they had to fear the multitude, since all the people regarded John as a true prophet.

Whichever way they answered, they were placed in the difficult position of having their unbelief and contradiction exposed. In the end they did not speak the truth but answered, *"We do not know."* Then Jesus also said that He would not tell them by what authority He did these things.

Their problem did not lie in a lack of evidence for judging. They had seen the ministry and the testimony of John the Baptist and yet did not believe, and they counted their own position and the people's reactions as more important than acknowledging the truth. The answer that they did not know was not really a confession of ignorance but a calculated evasion, refusing to acknowledge the truth while trying to avoid the people's blame. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

# “The Lord has need of it”

**< Mark 11:1-10 >**

**“Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, ‘Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it,’ and immediately he will send it here.’ So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, ‘What are you doing, loosing the colt?’ And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: ‘Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!’”**

## The colt is none other than us human beings

If we look at Mark chapter 11, which we have read today, Jesus tells His disciples to loose the colt and bring it. In the Bible this colt in fact refers to us human beings. That is, it refers to you

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and me. In the Old Testament, God said that to keep this young donkey alive, it had to be redeemed with a lamb. He said either to kill a lamb in its place and keep the young donkey alive, or, if one would not do so, to break the neck of the newborn donkey colt and kill it.

God says that if one pities the firstborn of a donkey and wants to keep it alive, he must redeem it with a lamb, killing the lamb to keep that animal alive. This prefigures none other than the remission of your sins and mine. Man is the very colt of a donkey. We ourselves are this colt. The characteristic of a young donkey is that it does not listen and is stubborn. Tell it to do this and it does that; a donkey seldom listens well. To keep such a young donkey alive, it had to be redeemed with a lamb without fail.

Another characteristic of the donkey is that it is born, grows up, carries its burden all its life long, and so ends. Man, too, is born, carries the burden of sin all his life, and dies. In this the donkey is exactly like man.

## The people whom the Lord uses

But in the New Testament, Jesus told His disciples to loose the colt and bring it. And He told them to say, "The Lord has need of it," if anyone asked. What our Lord is saying here is that He is calling workers. When our Lord calls workers, what kind of person does He call and use? He said to loose and bring a colt on which no one had yet sat.

The colt on which no one has sat means people who have not yet become servants of man. It is exactly such people that the Lord uses as His servants and His workers. If anyone has become the servant of man, the Lord cannot use him, for he already has another master. That is why He said here to bring a

young colt on which no one had ever sat.

The people whom the Lord uses, the people who become workers before the Lord, are those who have not become servants of man. Even those who are advanced in years—if they are people who are not servants of man themselves and do not serve man as their master—the Lord readily looses every part of us that is bound, leads us away, and uses us as His servants. I want to speak this word especially to the brothers and sisters and the young people who are still young in age and have not become servants of man. And it is the same for those who are advanced in years.

## Only when what binds us is loosed do we become the Lord's servants

Whoever has not become the servant of man can become God's worker, and God calls and uses such people. Of course, this colt also had many things binding it. A stake had been driven in and the donkey was tied to it, and Jesus said to loose it and bring it. For us to become God's servants, we must loose the many parts of us that are bound to people. Anywhere in this world it is easy for us to be bound; but if we would truly be servants, we must have the heart that wants to become God's servants, and if workers, God's workers.

This is exactly the word I want you to hear. I hope that rather than carrying people around, you will truly carry the Lord and become God's workers. When the Lord calls like this through God's servants, if you are those who have not become servants to man, you become the Lord's precious workers.

The way Jesus does things is truly one-sided; seen in one way, it cannot be understood. Going to someone else's town, He told

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His disciples: go to the village opposite you, and you will find a young colt tied; loose it and bring it, and if anyone asks you anything, say, “The Lord has need of it,” and immediately he will send it here. The disciples did just so, and when they went to that village, a colt was tied there by the door out on the street. Those standing there asked what they were doing, loosing the colt, and when the disciples spoke just as Jesus had said, it was permitted at once.

## The Lord uses even a young faith

Dear fellow believers, what would one do by loosing a colt? Even in the world, a donkey must be grown to carry a load; a young one has hardly any load it can carry. A young donkey can only be fed; it cannot even be put to work. Yet He says to loose the colt and bring it. This word means that even if we are born again and have not yet grown—young in age and young in faith—the Lord wants to use us, and He calls us through His servants.

Through the workers of the church He calls—Brother, do this; Sister, do that—and even if one has no ability of his own, if he obeys and follows as he is called, he becomes God’s precious worker. When Jesus rode on the back of that young donkey and entered the city, the donkey also received much glory together with Jesus. Do not decline, saying your faith is young. Even if you wonder what you could possibly do, if God’s servants lead you and God wants to use you through His servants, I hope you will comply and follow in faith. Then, like this colt, you will be used preciously by God.

When the colt was loosed and brought, people took off their garments and laid them on the donkey’s back. And they spread

branches on the road and followed, praising God. The colt rose to honor overnight. That they took off their garments and laid them on the donkey's back means that God's work is entrusted in that way. It means not only being entrusted with God's work, but carrying God's burden and doing God's work.

On its back our Lord rides and enters the city of Jerusalem. When God calls you, wants to use you, and needs you, do not decline. There is no need to decline. There is no need to draw back, saying that you are still young and know nothing. If the Lord says He will use you, the Lord gives you the ability and uses you fully. So I hope you will obey and follow in that part.

In this church, too, God continually calls workers and wants to use them. But the donkey may think, "I am still young; what could I do?" And if many tasks are entrusted to one who is young, he will also feel the burden of it, as if he were now going to die. Yet if we follow our Lord, we suffer with the Lord, but we also receive glory. When the Lord wants to use us, we have in fact received that choosing, and we have received many blessings before the Lord.

## The donkey that carries Jesus on its back

Our Lord does not call people who are completely entangled in the world, serving people and chasing power or fame. Rather, we must know that from among those who look somewhat immature—those who are truly young, those who received the remission of sin not long ago—He calls and uses many as God's servants and workers. I know that in our church, too, there are not many whose years in the faith are so long. If God calls you, I hope you will truly follow in faith. I hope you will work together with the Lord. There is suffering, but there is also much glory.

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I am a colt and you also are colts, and as such colts we want to carry Jesus on our backs; we do not want to carry drunkards or people like the thugs of the world on our backs. We truly have the heart that wants to carry Jesus on our backs. Having been born into this world and received the remission of sin, we have no desire to serve any person of the world. If only we can, we want to serve the Lord. I hope you, too, will truly become such donkeys that serve the Lord.

## Respond to God's calling

Dear fellow believers, the word telling the disciples to loose the colt and bring it is the word by which God calls workers within the church. If God wants to use you, I hope you will comply and follow. "The Lord has need of it"—does this make sense to you? A colt in someone else's town, with its own separate owner—yet the Lord says, go to that village opposite and one will be tied there; loose it and bring it, and if the owner says anything, say, "The Lord has need of it." When our Lord calls us like this, He does not attach any plausible reason. If He wants to use us, He simply tells us to come. When what binds us is loosed and we are brought—when we are drawn along like that—we then become the Lord's servants.

When God calls us as workers, do we not have many things binding us? We are bound to our families, bound to our workplaces, and bound in many ways to the businesses we have set up. But God's servants go and untie those binding cords. God's servants explain what is truly important and what is not important. Having heard, we can simply shake off the parts that are not important, and if there is some loss, we can bear the loss. In that way the Lord uses us.

The Lord does not first seek our understanding and then use us; He calls us, who are serving as slaves to the world, and says He will use us. And He rides on our backs, entrusts us with the Lord's work, and says He will use this servant in entering the city of Jerusalem. So when God calls you in order to use you, even if there are many parts of you that are bound, I hope you will consult and discuss well with God's servants, have those bound parts loosed, and become servants who serve the Lord and serve God.

There are many areas in which the Lord wants to use you. Yet are there perhaps some who decline, saying it cannot be? What does the Lord say? He says, "The Lord has need of it"; He says, "I would use you." If the Lord wants to use you, how will you respond to that invitation? Will you say no? Or will you say, "I have so many things binding me—please solve this for me"? If the Lord says He will use you, let Him use you. That He would use me at all is truly an overwhelming honor. Please use me—we must have such faith. If the Lord calls us, I hope we will be drawn along like this colt, as though yielding reluctantly, and while we live in this world, serve God, and with God gain glory and also receive suffering, becoming the Lord's servants. Dear fellow believers, do you understand?

Among you there are those whom God has already called and those whom He will call in the future. Through whom does He call? The Lord does not go and do it in person; He calls through His servants, that is, through His disciples. We must know this. A disciple is one who follows his teacher. If the servants of Jesus Christ, the disciples who follow the Lord, want to use you, I hope you will truly be used preciously. Today's word is exactly such a word.

Do you not think that God is calling you? It will divide into these two: "He is not calling me," and "He is calling me."

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Among the many brothers and sisters, there will also be some who say that even if He calls, they do not want it. But if the Lord's calling is clear, respond to it. You will never suffer loss. God calls and uses His servants and workers in this way, as He called Samuel while he was still young. I hope you will know this and live your life of faith accordingly. I have finished the Word. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

# Our life of faith begins from the faith that believes the word of God

**< Mark 11:11-25 >**

**"And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him,**

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**‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’ So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. ‘And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.”**

## The Bible is the Lord’s word and the word of God

If we read Mark chapter 11 from the beginning, the Lord tells His disciples to loose a colt that is tied, on which no one has yet sat, and bring it. He said that if anyone asked why they were doing this, they should say, “The Lord has need of it,” and immediately he would send it here. When the disciples went to a village and were about to loose the young colt, the owner asked why they were doing this, and when the disciples passed on what the Lord had told them, it happened just so. Thus the Lord rode that colt and entered Jerusalem.

This passage records what the Lord did, and the Bible records what Jesus Christ has done and will do. But if this were not the Lord’s Word, what meaning could it possibly have? The Lord is God, who knows all things, is with all things, and works in them. For creatures like us such a thing is not possible, but because the Lord had already worked fully in the heart of that owner, the owner permitted it just so when the disciples were about to bring the colt.

When we read the Bible, if we fail to focus on the fact that this Word is the very Word of our Lord and the Word of God, this Bible is of no benefit to us. If it is not the Lord's Word, the Bible is no different from reading a mere sprawling novel. Whose word is this Word of Scripture? It is the very Word of our Lord.

In the passage we read today, the next day, as Jesus was coming out from Bethany, He was hungry, and seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went near, but there was no fruit on it, only leaves. It was because it was not the season for figs. Even so, Jesus said to that tree that from now on, forever, no one would eat fruit from it. The next morning, as the disciples were passing by, they saw that fig tree dried up from the roots, and Peter said, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." It was fulfilled just as the Lord had spoken.

If we look at the Bible from a viewpoint that regards what the Lord did or what He said as though it were done by us human beings, we make a tremendous mistake and cannot discover what the Lord has done. The Lord is God, who created the universe and all things. Genesis chapter 1 is the record of that creation. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:1–5).* In that place where there was nothing, where darkness was full and everything was in disorder, God said for there to be light, and there was light. When the Creator spoke, everything became just so; this is the very power of the Lord.

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## The Lord's Word is fulfilled just as He has spoken

Jesus Christ came to this earth in human flesh and accomplished the work of saving all sinners. Going about with His disciples, He became hungry and went to a fig tree, but it was not yet the season for it to bear fruit, so there was no fruit, and the tree the Lord cursed dried up completely, to the roots, the next morning. When the disciples told Him that fact, the Lord spoke like this. *"So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:22–24).*

The Lord came in human flesh, but He is God, who created the universe. That is why, when He cursed the fig tree, it dried up to the roots, and to the disciples He said to have faith in God, and that whoever says to this mountain to be lifted up and cast into the sea, believing that what he says will be done and not doubting, it will be so. After His resurrection and ascension the disciples would pray to the Lord, and He was telling them in advance that if they truly believe and pray, it is fulfilled just so. It is because the Lord is the Creator, who transcends time and space and speaks now even of what will happen in the distant future.

Here we can think of several things. First, the Lord is not a man or a creature. Second, the words the Lord spoke are the very truth. This Bible is the Lord's own Word, which He spoke by appearing to His servants and had them record as He moved their hearts. Third, the Lord wants us to have true faith, faith that has fruit. The Lord made man in the image of God, and when man

fell into sin, He came to us in human flesh and accomplished completely the work of saving us, humankind, from all sins.

## God's will is surely fulfilled

Just as the Lord said to loose the colt and bring it, and to say, "The Lord has need of it," when the disciples obeyed and did exactly so, it came to pass exactly so. This word means that the Lord works in all things and fulfills all His will. I heard news that a certain coworker gave books to people he knew and had them read, but they did not seem to understand or believe, and he was disappointed, wondering how the understanding of what he reads and the understanding of what they read could differ so much. When we preach the gospel, too, are we not disappointed when we have preached our utmost and the other person says something absurd, does not understand, and does not believe? We are disappointed, but God is not disappointed, and He fulfills all His will.

The person who is fitting in the Lord's sight—that is, the one who is poor in spirit and fears God—believes the word of the evangelist, and everyone who is to believe believes. But the person whose heart is hardened and proud does not understand even when the Bible is opened right before his eyes and explained to him as one would explain to a little child. It is because there are many tares and stones in his heart, and there is no heart in him that fears, loves, and wants to believe God. Therefore we must know and believe the fact that all the things God has planned since He created the whole universe and all things are fulfilled according to God's will.

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## Empty-shell faith and faith that has fruit

When the Lord said to the fig tree that forever no one would eat fruit from it, it was a word directed at religious people who, like a tree lush with leaves only, merely attend church faithfully, keep only its ceremonies, and give their weight to outward conduct. It means that they never receive salvation and never become children of God, and that people do not reach salvation through them either. We must rightly know the Word of God and its intent. There are many who attend church, yet only ceremonially, only as an empty shell.

There are countless religions in the world, and some people choose Christianity as one of them and attend church because of the sense of security that believing in God would probably be better. But they treat the Lord's Word recorded in the Bible carelessly. What God has said is what matters, yet they pay attention only to what the pastor says, what denomination that church belongs to, and whether it is a respectable church that people recognize. This is exactly like the fig tree lush with leaves only. The Lord was saying that the person who lives such a life of faith enters the fire that is never quenched forever and is cursed in both spirit and flesh.

## Our life of faith begins from the faith that believes the word of God

I myself, and you as well—we are already people who believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Yet the faith that everything is fulfilled just as God has spoken, the faith that this Bible is the very Word of God, is somewhat lacking in us. The word telling the disciples to loose the colt and bring it, and

the word cursing the fig tree that had only lush leaves—all these words teach us that everything is fulfilled just as the Lord has spoken. Your life of faith and mine begins from believing the Word of God.

The faith that if God has spoken, it is all fulfilled just so; the faith that even if one says for this mountain to be lifted up and cast into the sea, it will be so—this is true faith. The faith that the gospel of the water and the Spirit will be preached to all the world and that then the Lord will come again; the faith that whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit receives salvation from all sins and becomes a child of God—to have such faith is real faith. At times our faith is shaken according to circumstances, and we often feel frustrated, wondering why things turn out this way when we are following the Lord. At such times we must examine what we are believing: whether we truly believe and hold on to the Lord and the Word recorded in this Bible, or whether, though we have received the remission of sin, we are merely following circumstances. If you truly believe the Word of God and have the faith that the written Word is fulfilled just as it stands, you set your direction and course rightly.

Because you believe the Word of God, you clearly set your direction and course not on yourselves but on the Word of God. But without the faith that believes the Word of God, you cannot set your direction properly, and you can only be shaken like a reed swaying in autumn. The person who believes the Word of God lives a fruitful life of faith like a firm rock, like a mass of stone that does not move. We must examine what your life of faith and mine is founded on: whether it stands on the faith that believes God and the faith that believes the Word of God, or whether it merely depends on one's own thoughts and the common sense of the world.

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Let us look at the word recorded in Mark chapter 8. *"Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, 'I see men like trees, walking.' Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly" (Mark 8:22–25).* The blind man at first said that he saw people dimly, walking like trees; but when the Lord laid His hands on his eyes again, he came to see all things clearly.

For us to open our spiritual eyes is to come to see that the Lord came to this earth and, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of humankind, bore all your sins and mine once and for all. When we come to know the fact that with the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist the sins of all humankind passed on to Jesus, and that carrying those sins He was nailed to the Cross and received all the judgment for sin, we at last live our life of faith with brightened eyes.

The Scripture says that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. God the Father sent His Son to this earth, and that Son bore your sins and mine with the baptism He received from John, and carrying those sins He was nailed to the Cross, received all the judgment, rose from the dead, and became our Savior. When we know that this gospel of the water and the Spirit is the very work done for you and me, the work directly related to us, we become truly thankful for the work of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and we live our life of faith by faith.

What the Lord said when He saw the fig tree, what He said about prayer, His receiving baptism from John the Baptist in

order to fulfill all things, and His word to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you—when we know and believe that all of these are words spoken toward you and me, we live a life of right and firm faith before God. Even the person who attends church must surely know the fact that whoever bears no fruit before the Lord and is not born again receives the eternal curse, just like the tree that dried up from the roots and died. We must clearly know the fact that we must be born again of water and the Spirit, and so live our life of faith.

Would it be enough just to attend church? We preach the Word of God to the whole world, and we believe that the Word recorded in the Bible is all fulfilled just as it stands, through you and me. That is why we have no worry and our hearts are glad. We are preaching with all our strength so that many people may hear the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receive the remission of sin, and precious testimonies are coming to us from all over the world. It is only that those who send us news are few; I believe that those who receive the remission of sin are truly many. If one soul, more precious than the whole world, returns before the Lord and becomes a child of God, then we are the most powerful evangelists in the world.

This gospel of the water and the Spirit that we preach through our books is the most powerful word in the world next to the Bible. God works in that way. Therefore, even when there are difficulties, we have hope, and we go forward steadily. The Lord keeps the Church of God, and He fulfills all His will through you and me in the church, and through the coworkers who are all over the world. Just as He said that even if one says for a mountain to be lifted up and cast into the sea, it will be so if he believes, because we believe the words the Lord has spoken, we believe that the gospel of the water and the Spirit will be

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preached to all the world.

Though we live in this world, it is truly good that we believe in the Lord. It is good that the Lord's Word is the very Word of God; it is good that He fulfills everything just as He has spoken; it is good that our direction is set properly so that we can live by faith; and we have no worry. I want our Lord to keep the Church of God fully and to bless all the work we do. I want Him to give us blessing in both spirit and flesh. I have finished the Word. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

# “Believe that you receive them”

**< Mark 11:12-14, 19-24 >**

**“Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, ‘Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.’ And His disciples heard it.”**

**“When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, ‘Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.’ So Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”**

In today’s passage from Mark, our Lord, taking His disciples, was coming out from Bethany the next morning when He felt hungry. Then, seeing from afar a fig tree standing lush with

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leaves, He went to see if perhaps there might be fruit on it, but there was no fruit, only leaves. Toward that fruitless tree the Lord spoke a curse, that from now on, forever, no one would eat fruit from it.

The fruit of the fig tree can be eaten around midsummer. In this tree the flower blooms inside the fruit, and only when the fruit is fully ripe does the flower appear. From summer through autumn the fruit keeps coming, and even if it is picked and eaten, the tree bears again and yields a great deal. But the time when the Lord went to it was not yet the season for bearing fruit. The passage also makes clear that it was not the season for figs. Around spring the leaves come up fresh and green, but there is no fruit yet.

Does this not seem somewhat strange here? A tree bears fruit only when its season comes; how could He demand fruit when the season had not yet come, and curse the tree because it had no fruit? According to the natural order, the flower blooms in spring and the fruit must grow and ripen before it can be picked and eaten, and only then may even the owner rightly demand fruit. But the Lord, going against the natural order, demanded fruit though it was not the season, and when there was no fruit, He cursed the tree. And when one night had passed and the disciples looked the next morning, that fig tree had dried up from the roots.

## *"Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them"*

Through this event the Lord taught us faith. The Lord said, *"whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says"*

*(Mark 11:23)*, and continuing, in verse 24, He said, *"Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24)*.

What our Lord demands of us is precisely the faith that believes God. He wants us to live not by following nature but by the faith that believes God. It is the word of promise: believe that whatever you have prayed for and asked has already been received, and if you believe, it will be so. When there is something we hope for, if we believe according to the Word, we pray, "God, please give it," and then believe that the Lord will give it. Then the Lord Himself works and makes it become just so. The Lord Himself is telling us that this is faith.

Dear fellow believers, how many things we need as we live our life of faith! It is not just one or two. If even one among those many things is missing, we feel the lack, and everything must be provided. But can we accomplish all of it by human strength? We cannot. It is exactly at such times, He says, that we must use faith. We are to ask God for what we need and believe that God has given it. If we believe that it is as good as already received, God makes it become just so.

This is something outside the natural order. Natural things like the fig tree bear fruit only when their season comes, but in the kingdom of God, even when the season has not come, if we pray and believe that God will give—indeed, that He has already given—it surely becomes just so. What is the life of faith? It is believing that if we have asked in prayer for what we need, God has surely given it. Then it becomes just so. This is what the Bible calls faith.

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## The life of faith is truly easy

Dear fellow believers, can you believe? The life of faith is not something that goes according to the natural order. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. As we live, how many times are we in want! How many matters are there that we must solve with God's help, borrowing God's strength! If we pray about anything at all and believe the fact that God surely does what we have prayed for, it becomes just so. The Lord does it for us. This is faith.

Therefore we must live by faith. It is said, "The just shall live by faith." If we went only by the natural order, what could we do? Nothing at all. But if we do things by faith, we accomplish great things, and if we live by faith, any work at all is possible. Not believing is the fault; if we believe God we receive blessing, and if we do not believe we receive the curse. Even a person who has received the remission of sin—if he does not live by the faith that believes God, nothing comes of anything.

Looking at this word, I think, how easy this is—where in the world is there anything easier than this? He says to believe that what we have prayed for and asked has been received. Because I believe the Lord, there are many things I request of Him. I get up in the morning, sit down, and pray, telling Him what I need and what the church needs: please give all of this; I believe You will supply it, Lord. Because I believe that He surely gives, you cannot imagine how freely my prayers flow out.

Dear fellow believers, if you have a withdrawal slip at the bank, and payment is clearly guaranteed, you have only to fill it in and hand it over. Write in one million won and one million won comes out; write in ten million won and ten million won comes out; it comes out just as you submit it. Faith is exactly like this. Do you believe the fact that when you pray to God out

of need, God gives? That is faith. It is for lack of faith that one cannot pray; if one has faith, he prays. It is for lack of faith that one falls into despair; if one has faith, he does not despair.

Within the will of God, faith is like a blank check: we claim according to our need and believe that God will give. In keeping house, in raising children, in leading brothers and sisters, we tell Him, "I believe You will make it go well, God." The last card we lay down is always the card of faith. When we lay down this card of faith, He says, as it were, "So you believe this much; I will do this much for you," and He does for us as much as our faith.

Taking up the fig tree, the Lord explains something to us: that faith is not the natural order but the faith that believes God. Believing God is enough. If we believe God we receive, and we receive everything we have prayed to God for and asked out of need. The point is that in the Bible, in praying and in living the life of faith, we must have the faith that believes God. On our side, we must believe God.

God tells us to believe as much as we will, and He has said that if we believe, He gives us anything. The question is whether, on our side, we believe God or do not believe Him. If we believe, He does for us according to our believing; if we do not believe, there is nothing. So on our side we need to believe God. How would we know faith without ever using it? Try believing God. It is not right to refuse to believe at all, saying it probably will not work without even trying it.

Dear fellow believers, let us try believing God. Nothing makes the other party feel as hurt as not being believed. And what is as reassuring as being believed? Even among people, if we say to someone, "I trust you," we do not worry. When someone trusts me, a sense of responsibility arises, and when we trust one another and receive trust, it is truly reassuring and

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pleasant. God, too, is the One who can do anything at all for us; if only we believe on our side, God is glad, for He is fully able to do it, and He is glad again as He does it for the one who believes. Yet the problem is that on man's side, people do not believe God.

God speaks to us. He says, as it were, "Please believe Me; if you only believe Me, I will do for you whatever you ask." But how much have we believed God? Before we were born again, and after we received the remission of sin, how much did we believe? We said we believed, and then quit as soon as things became a little hard. How many things have we believed to the end? Let us believe God.

God is omniscient and omnipotent and merciful, and He truly delights in giving. Ask, and it will be given; seek, and you will find. But because on man's side we do not believe Him, God cannot work. If we believed Him to the end, He would work; but we believe and then stop, entrust and then snatch it back—how pitiful this is. How often do we repeat this: entrusting a problem, saying, "God, please take charge of this matter," and then a little later taking it back, saying, "Please hand it back"? Let us, first of all, believe God.

In that "it will be so" of His word—believe that you have received whatever you have prayed for and asked, and then it will be so—is also contained the promise that when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we shall receive power and reach the end of the earth to become witnesses of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Since we have received the remission of sin, we become witnesses of that gospel as a matter of course. There is nothing extra for us to strain at; we have only to believe God. If we believe God and act, God works together with us.

## The fig tree is none other than ourselves

The Lord went to the fig tree whose season had not come, saw that it had no fruit, and cursed it, saying that through it people would never eat fruit forever. If this fig tree is us, then even when our circumstances are not ready, when we pray before God, saying, "God, please do this for me; I believe," and believe God, we bear fruit even though the season has not come. That is exactly what faith is.

In the Bible, a tree always refers to a person. The Lord is saying that this fig tree is us human beings. If we believe God it works; if we do not believe, by the natural order it never works, no matter how long we wait. Doing the work of God requires believing God; it is done by faith. Just as we received the remission of sin by faith, so also in our living, in our worries, and in everything we will need from now on, if we pray and ask, believing God, and believe the fact that God has given, it is surely accomplished. He has already given. If we believe, God does it for us just so.

To teach His disciples this faith, the Lord took them along with Him and showed it to them directly. Being hungry and looking for something to eat, He saw the leaves of a large fig tree in the distance and went to it, but though the leaves were lush there was not a single fruit. Even in the disciples' eyes it was not the season for fruit to grow. But the Lord said to it that now people would never, forever, eat fruit from it, and came away; and when a day had passed and they were passing before it again, the fig tree had dried up stiff, from its leaves to its roots, and was dead.

The Lord wanted to teach His disciples this: if you believe Me, you can eat fruit even when it is not the season; if you have received the remission of sin and become My disciples, you must

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not try to live following nature but must believe Me in order to live; if you believe, I will work for you. And He said again and again that even if one says for a mountain to be lifted up and cast into the sea, if he believes it will be done and does not doubt, it will be so, and to know that whatever we have prayed for and asked has been received, and then it will be so. We, too, must raise even our children by faith, and must entrust to God by faith even things that look impossible. Believing is enough.

## Faith is the key to receiving the answer to prayer

Believing is the very key to receiving the answer to prayer from God. The faith that believes the fact that God gives what I have asked is the key to receiving its fulfillment. In this passage our Lord clearly taught us faith. Here is the reason we must live by faith, and God is demanding of us the faith that believes Him.

Asking for what we need and believing God—that is faith. God does all the rest. We must engrave on our hearts once again the fact that the only thing for us to do is believe. Whatever work we do, when we pray to God with faith and say, “I believe You will do this for me, God,” God works for us.

The most important key in prayer is believing God. What matters is not grandiose prayer but prayer that asks for what is needed. Do not strain to pray well; ask God for what you need, and believe that you will receive whatever you have asked and prayed for. It is enough to believe the fact that God surely gives—that He surely puts it into our hands. All we have to do is ask and believe. It is not a matter of working schemes and methods. Before any deed, is it not faith that is needed?

Concerning this faith, the Book of Romans says, “The just shall live by faith,” and today’s passage says that if we only

believe God, it becomes just so. It is truly simple. There is no formula at all. We have only to believe for what we have asked. We have only to believe that God will surely put this into our hands. That is exactly what faith is. Is faith something one has only when his years in the faith are long? No. It is whether or not the faith that believes God is in your heart. If you believe, you are a person of faith; if you do not believe, you are not a person of faith.

Do you want to taste God working? Then believe God. Believing is enough. If you do not believe, it is a curse; and if you do not believe, things do not simply stay as they are—even what is natural dies away. If we believe God we live, and if we do not believe we receive the curse.

I, too, believe in many areas. There are truly many times when I believe for what is impossible. There are times when I believe and it still does not happen; either my faith was lacking, or it is God's will not to answer—it is such things. He has said that He gives what is best, so God does as He wants to do. Our Lord also, when He prayed, asked that this cup be taken away from Him, yet said that it should be done not according to His own will but according to the Father's will, ultimately entrusting it to the Father's will. But it is enough to believe that whatever we have prayed for and asked has been received. If we believe, saying, "I believe You will surely give it," the rest is God's work to do.

So we work by faith, make our living by faith, fight against Satan the Devil by faith, follow the Lord by faith, and preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit by faith as well. Family life, worries, living itself—all are done by faith. We live because we believe; if we do not believe God, we cannot live. He has promised that if we have faith even as small as a mustard seed, God does it for us. That we have lived until now is also because

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we believed God. What is the one thing we absolutely must have? The faith that believes God. If only we have this faith, there is no need to worry. The Bible is entirely a history of faith. Going to heaven is by faith, and going to hell is also by faith.

For the person who says, "I believe that the Lord has removed all my sins," there is heaven; and to the person who believes that he still has sin, He says, as it were, "According to your faith let it be to you," and so, just as he believes, there is hell. It comes to be according to faith. That all things under heaven came into being, and the fact that God made this world—these, too, we know and are convinced of by the faith that believes God. Everything, whatever it is, is faith.

## If we do not believe God, even what we have is taken away

Dear fellow believers, faith, too, must be put to use. Just as the fig tree naturally bears fruit when its season comes and ripens from early summer to late autumn, there is also a life lived following nature. But if we believe God, we can pick and eat fruit from the fig tree even in winter. That things become possible even in the midst of such impossibility, that we are clothed with God's blessing—this is faith. In your life, in every worry, in everything we plead for, the faith that believes God is needed.

Seeing the fig tree, the Lord could have simply passed it by. He could have passed on, thinking it was not the season. But He cursed it, saying that people would never eat fruit from it forever. It means that if we do not believe and live following nature, we receive the curse and cannot keep even what we have. If the LORD does not build the house, they labor in vain who build it.

We are born through God, protected through God, and everything we have is kept through God.

After receiving the remission of sin, one may perhaps hold this kind of thought: since my circumstances are good enough, from now on, even without believing God, I can live solving this problem this way. Throw that thought away. I hope you will know that living by following nature is itself being cursed. Before God it is either blessing or curse; there is no middle ground. If we do not believe, we do not even keep what we started with—rather, even what we have is taken away. That is exactly the word in the parable of the talents, where He said to take away what the one who had received one talent had, and give it to another.

There is nothing to lose by believing God. He is One worthy of our trust. If we believe, this comes about and that comes about, and we are protected, kept, and blessed—how good that is! It is the person who has received the remission of sin who believes exactly like this. The need to believe God belongs to the person who has received the remission of sin. God has never once lied to us. So let us believe and live. Even when things are not going well, cry out, "God, I believe!"

Whatever we do, faith is absolutely necessary. Just as licorice goes into every packet of medicine at the herbalist's shop without exception, so into all the life we live and into every work of following God we must put the faith that believes God. Dear fellow believers, let us use faith often. Let us believe Him often. With faith, the way ahead opens; if we do not believe, even that goes downhill. Let us not regard this as a mere sermon, but think again, at this point, how much we have believed God all this while.

As we go through life, are there not times when the way ahead is stifling and hard? At such times, believe. Since He said

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to believe that whatever we have prayed for and asked has been received, everything we need is all contained within that "whatever." We ask for what we need, and believing that God surely does it for us, we lay down our last card. Since it is said that the just shall live by faith, we have only to believe. This is the very life of faith that the righteous live.

The Bible says that this is the very life of faith. Our Lord did not tell us to do some great and difficult thing. He simply said to have faith in God, and He said that this is the life of faith. Whatever happens, whatever matter you meet, believe God in every thought, in every plan, in every worry. Then God fulfills it all. I give thanks to God. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

# Are we acting in faith?

**< Mark 11:20-24 >**

**"Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."**

## Are you acting in faith?

Do you have the faith that believes God? When you do some work, do you do it by the faith that believes God? That is what most becomes the question for us, and it is the most important matter. For the born-again believer, the most important thing is faith. Are you living the rest of your life by faith? Are you preaching the gospel by faith, working at your job by faith, serving the church by faith, and following the Lord by faith?

However well one may act, if in his heart he does not act by the faith that believes the Lord, I know that it is nothing. It is like a house built on the sand, and sooner or later it will all collapse.

We must each ask ourselves once: am I really following the Lord by faith, and am I really working by faith? If, having asked,

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the answer is that you are not really acting in faith, I hope you will inspect your faith, think it over once more, and do whatever you do by the faith that believes God. Only then does your way ahead prosper, and only then is fruit borne in your life.

What matters is not what we do or how much devotion we pour into doing it; whether the Lord's work arises or does not arise depends on whether we do that work by the faith that believes God. How important, then, is faith! If, when we do some work, no work of God arises and no fruit is borne, a problem of faith has certainly arisen there. We must examine whether we are doing that work by faith, or whether we are merely doing it because it must be done.

## We must follow the Lord not by custom but by faith.

Once the church has been formed and its ground has been prepared to some degree, you and I can simply go along. When we have lived the life of faith for a long time, we come to know all the administration and the customs within the church. But we must check once whether we are really following, not by some custom, but by the faith we ourselves believe with—whether we are really doing whatever we do by faith.

Only when we act in faith does the work of God arise, and only then are you at ease. And we come to do it willingly, and the work becomes efficient. The person who does his own work by his own faith does his best, but for the person who does it grudgingly, merely because it must be done, there is no fruit. It is the same with our life of faith.

Are you living your church life not by faith but because it must be done this way, or are you acknowledged before God

through acting in faith? If we want to receive God's help, we must do whatever we do by faith. Our working life must be lived by the faith that believes the Lord, preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit must be done by faith, and serving the Lord must also be done by faith. Only when we act in faith does the work of God arise, is the Lord pleased, and do we follow in the Lord's footsteps. Apart from faith it can never be done.

Dear fellow believers, when we have carried on the life of faith to a certain point, a critical juncture arises at some line. That juncture is precisely whether we are acting in faith—whether we really have believing faith. When we were young in the faith, we lived by the faith our leaders led us with; but once we have grown a little, God is demanding of us whether we ourselves have the faith that believes God. Do you truly believe God? Do you believe that what you are doing is what God is pleased with? Do you clearly believe God and act in faith? We must inspect our faith.

## *"Have faith in God"*

To the believer who has received the remission of sin, I say again: we must act in faith. Then, whatever the matter, God is with us and works. Here, the fig tree dried up from the roots. As they passed by in the morning and saw it dried up from the roots, Peter, remembering, said, *"Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away" (Mark 11:21)*, and Jesus answered and said, *"Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22)*.

It means that if we believe and act, it becomes like this. When we must do some work, we should first discern whether God is pleased with it or is not pleased, and if God is pleased, we must do this work by the faith that believes God. We must act with

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the faith that He will help me and accomplish this work. When we act in faith, the work of God arises.

If, after being born again, one has not learned faith and has no faith, it is so pitiable. Do you understand? When we believe God there is boldness in our hearts, there is delight, and there is joy. But if, not believing God, bound to forms and bound to conventions, we do things because they must be done, how draining, how fruitless, and how stifling a thing that is!

## God is pleased when we preach the gospel in faith

Dear fellow believers, do you believe that God is pleased when we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit within the church, the body of God? Then do you have the faith that if I preach this gospel, people will certainly receive salvation? Do you act in faith? We must have the faith that if I preach, people surely receive the remission of sin.

When we preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, we run into obstacles and the brakes are applied. Various problems arise, and confusion sometimes comes. But if we act by the faith that believes God, without fail the soul receives salvation. When we act with the faith that the Lord saves this soul, the faith that this soul receives salvation, then whatever obstacle there may be, we overcome it all and push through it all, and that soul surely receives salvation. It comes to be according to the faith one believes with.

But what about what is not of faith? When it does not work out, we quit in the middle. But if we truly believe God and act, then whatever difficulty there may be, it is surely accomplished, fruit is surely borne, and that work is achieved. That is the difference between having faith and not having faith. Where is

there any work that goes forward without problems? In anything we do, difficulties are bound to arise. Then are we all really acting by the faith that believes God, or are we acting because we must act this way?

## I hope you will live by faith

Dear fellow believers, we must act by the faith that believes God. If you do not have that faith, you will need to inspect yourself once more, pray before God, establish your relationship with the Lord once more, and carry forward in faith the works God has entrusted to us. Only then do we taste the Lord's helping hand. Then we enter into the Lord, into faith, and live there.

Are we all believing God as we act? Or are we just getting up because day breaks, sleeping because the sun goes down, doing things because they must be done, just going along as things drift? Dear fellow believers, each one of us must have the faith that believes God—that is, if we have received the remission of sin. And we must do the work each of us is charged with by faith, preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit by faith, follow and serve the Lord and the church by faith, and carry on our life in society by faith as well. If we do not do so, we end up destroying ourselves.

Is what I am doing really right? Is my life really going down the right path? Am I really going by faith, or am I living this way because I must live this way? Dear fellow believers, I hope you will remember the fact that we must act by the faith that believes God, the fact that we must live by faith, and live by faith. I will close the Word here. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

# The humble King who looses the tied donkey and uses it

**< Mark 11:1-10 >**

**"Now when they drew near Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, He sent two of His disciples; and He said to them, 'Go into the village opposite you; and as soon as you have entered it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has sat. Loose it and bring it. And if anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it,' and immediately he will send it here.' So they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door outside on the street, and they loosed it. But some of those who stood there said to them, 'What are you doing, loosing the colt?' And they spoke to them just as Jesus had commanded. So they let them go. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes on it, and He sat on it. And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Then those who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: 'Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'"**

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## The starting point of the calling is not our qualification but the Lord's will

Jesus drew near to Jerusalem. It was now the road on which the time for Him to bear the Cross was near. The Lord sent two of His disciples to the village opposite and spoke concretely. He said that when they entered it, a colt on which no one had yet sat would be tied there, and told them to loose it and bring it. He also told them to say, "The Lord has need of it," if anyone asked the reason. When the disciples went, everything was just as the Lord had said. The colt was tied by the door out on the street, and when they loosed it, people asked what they were doing. When the disciples answered just as Jesus had told them, they permitted it. In this short scene, the One who begins the work and opens the way from beginning to end is Jesus.

We usually think that for someone to be used, he must first prove his ability. We suppose that only after knowing much, having rich experience, and receiving people's recognition can one take on important work. But the colt that appears in the passage has no career to put forward. No one had yet sat on it, and there is no record of its having carried a load. What is more, it did not untie its own binding cord and come to the Lord by itself. The Lord saw it first, spoke, and sent His disciples to loose it. The colt was not chosen because it proved some special qualification; it was placed on that road because the Lord wanted to use it. The starting point of the calling is not our greatness but the Lord's will.

That said, we must not read this passage as a permission to take someone's property at will. Still less does it mean that a church leader may dress up his own demands as if they were God's command and order people about as he pleases. The One who said, *"The Lord has need of it" (Mark 11:3)* in the passage

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is Jesus Christ, entering Jerusalem. The disciples did not take the donkey to fill their own greed. They passed on the words the Lord had spoken just as they were, and those who heard them permitted it. Therefore this event is not a story that establishes man's unlimited authority; it shows the sovereignty of Jesus the King and the faith of the disciples who obeyed His word.

## We, who were bound with a cord we could not cut ourselves

What the passage shows first is the state of 'being tied.' The colt was by the door, but it could not choose its own path. Though it had feet and strength, as long as the cord was tied it could not go to the Lord. In our lives, too, there are bonds like this. The heart that serves people's evaluation as if it were a master, the fixation on never suffering the slightest loss, the desire that clings to the world's honor and power, and the fear of failure can bind us. Family, workplace, and livelihood are not evil in themselves. We must faithfully carry the responsibilities given to us. The problem is when they occupy a place higher than God and rule our conscience and faith. When a person who ought to serve the Lord comes to serve only the world's recognition, his body may look free, but his heart lives on tied.

The bondage of sin is more fundamental than that. In the Word of the Old Testament there is the statute to redeem the firstborn of a donkey with a lamb. On the path by which the donkey lived lay the sacrifice of a lamb. This word makes us think of the way we are saved. Man cannot remove the wages of sin with his own good deeds, nor can he wash away the sin of his heart with religious life. Merely resolving to cut the cord oneself does not deliver one from sin and judgment. Salvation is

not an event in which a person tied to sin came to the Lord by his own strength; it is an event of grace in which the Lord came to the sinner, paid the price, and loosed him.

## Being loosed comes first, and being used comes next

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all the sins of the world. And carrying those sins He went to the Cross, received the judgment of sin, died, and rose from the dead. All the sins of the person who believes in his heart this salvation, which Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood, are removed once and for all. He receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, is born again, and becomes a child of God. Because the Lord first untied the cord of sin, the believer no longer lives under condemnation as a slave of sin. In his flesh there are still weakness and shortcomings, but in his heart he becomes a righteous person without sin and serves God. Being loosed comes first, and being used comes next. It is not that we are loosed because we serve; it is because the Lord has loosed us that we serve with thanksgiving.

If this order is reversed, faith soon becomes a heavy transaction. One comes to think that by serving much he obtains salvation, that by giving many offerings he is recognized by God, and that by enduring longer the remission of sin is maintained. But salvation is not a reward arising from man's works. It is a gift received by believing in God's grace. At the same time, that grace does not leave us as irresponsible and lazy people. The person who has received the remission of sin comes to want to give his heart to the Lord who saved him. Evangelism, serving, and obedience are not conditions that pay the price of salvation

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but the fruit borne by the salvation already received—just as the colt was not loosed because it was used by the Lord, but was loosed by the Lord's word and then used by Him.

In the days of serving a newly planted church, a person once came speaking as though he would offer great wealth to the church. Since the church's circumstances were difficult, the heart could have been moved by that offer. But the first thing said to that person was not a word telling him to offer his wealth. He was urged not to offer money first when he had not even received the remission of sin, but to hear the gospel and receive the remission of sin. The fact that the person's intent was not sound came to light later, but this incident shows clearly what comes first. The church is not a place that calls souls in order to gain people's money or abilities. The Lord looses souls tied to sin with the gospel and gives them life, and He leads the saved to offer themselves and their possessions in service with thanksgiving. However great a devotion may look, if it is placed ahead of the gospel, the order has been overturned.

## Obedience that neither goes ahead of the Word nor draws back from it

We must also look closely at the disciples' obedience. They did not move only after understanding all the circumstances in advance. It was before they had confirmed with their own eyes in front of which house the donkey was, or how the people beside it would react. But when the Lord told them to go, they went; when He told them to loose it and bring it, they loosed it; and when they were questioned, they spoke just as the Lord had taught them. Faith is not vague optimism or impulse. It is hearing the words the Lord has actually spoken and moving one step

according to that word. The disciples did not add their own schemes, nor did they exaggerate unnecessarily. The safe path of obedience lies in neither going ahead of the Lord's word nor drawing back from it.

We, too, are asked the same question before the Word. Though the Lord says He has already washed away all our sins, will we wait until our own feelings become clean? Though He says He made those saved by grace for good works, will we only keep saying that we can do nothing? Though an opportunity has opened to love, to serve, and to preach the gospel, will we put it off, saying we will do it after we have become more perfect people? Faith is not overestimating oneself, nor is it refusing the Lord's word with one's own lack as the excuse. It is believing the fact that though I am weak, the Lord who has spoken is faithful, and offering today the obedience that is possible today.

## Even a still-young faith grows within the Word

That the colt was young also stays in the heart. The fact that it was a donkey no one had yet sat on shows that having little experience does not mean the Lord cannot use someone. A person who has newly received the remission of sin may not know the Bible well. He may be unaccustomed to prayer and church life, and clumsy in speaking or in ways of helping people. But the Lord is not One who calls and uses only finished products. He leads and grows the person who has the heart to learn the Lord's word, the heart to follow the Lord's will rather than be a servant of man, and the heart to answer when He calls. The God who called Samuel when he was young still today trains people young in faith within the Word and uses them for precious work.

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Even so, we must not make the words ‘young faith’ an excuse for not preparing. The colt came to Jesus led by the disciples’ hands. We, too, must not insist that we can judge everything alone, but must learn the Word and know how to consult within the church. Yet this does not mean regarding anything a person says as the voice of God. The calling must always be discerned within the words of Scripture and the truth of the gospel. We must examine whether something is a demand that exalts a man and oppresses people, or a serving that reveals Jesus and gives life to souls. The Lord’s servant does not bind people as his own possession; with the Lord’s word he looses the bindings of the world and leads people to Jesus.

## The praise goes not to the donkey but to the King

When the colt came to Jesus, the disciples laid their garments on it. And Jesus sat on it. The most important One here is not the donkey but Jesus. Though the donkey entered a road where it received the people’s cheers, the object of the praise was not the donkey. The people cried out “Hosanna” toward Him who comes in the name of the Lord. If the person being used forgets this fact, serving soon becomes a means of piling up his own glory. He rejoices when people recognize and thank him, and grows discouraged when they do not. But the true worker is not a person who puts himself on display; he is a person who bears Jesus and reveals Him. When we preach the gospel, the One the soul must look to is not the ability of the evangelist but Jesus, who accomplished salvation with the water and the Spirit.

The load the donkey came to carry on its back was different from before. It did not endlessly carry the heavy desires of the world; it bore Jesus and took part in the King’s road. To be used

by the Lord does not mean doing what I like to my heart's content under a religious name. It is embracing responsibly the gospel, the souls, and the work of the church that the Lord has entrusted. At times it may be tidying and caring that hardly catch the eye; it may be praying for the sick; it may be explaining the gospel step by step to one soul. Teaching the young, listening to a discouraged member, and faithfully keeping the place one is charged with are also ways of bearing the Lord. What matters is not the size of the work but for whom and what we carry as we go.

Jesus entered the city riding not a splendid warhorse but a young donkey. The kings of the world display power and majesty, but Jesus came in a humble form. Yet that humility is not incompetence. It is a sovereign humility that knew where the donkey was tied, knew what question would be asked, and opened every way so that the people would permit it. That King did not come to oppress His people; He came to give up His own life and save sinners. Therefore the serving of the person who bears the Lord cannot be violent or boastful either. He must speak the truth clearly yet not crush people, sacrifice yet not put forward his own merits, and use the authority entrusted to him not for his own benefit but for giving life to souls.

On the road, garments and branches were spread, and the multitudes going before and following lifted up their voices. The colt entered the middle of a scene it had never experienced before. Being with the Lord is neither suffering only nor glory only. Behind the cheers of the entry into Jerusalem, the road of the Cross was waiting. The person who serves the Lord also at times enjoys joy and reward, but he may meet misunderstanding, toil, and loss. What matters is not to become proud when there are cheers, and not to run away when hardship comes. If we believe the fact that the Lord is riding and that the Lord is leading

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us to the destination, we do not change masters according to the rise and fall of circumstances.

The multitude cried out “Hosanna” and praised Him who comes in the name of the Lord and the kingdom of David. But from the cheers recorded in the passage alone, we cannot conclude how much they understood the road of the Cross that Jesus would walk. What is clear is the fact that Jesus revealed His kingship not in the way of seizing the world’s power and lording it over people, but in the way of bearing the sinner’s sins and giving up His own life. Therefore the person used by the Lord also must not regard worldly success as being immediately the same as the Lord’s glory. More important than many people following and one’s name becoming known is that the gospel is preached rightly and that one soul receives the remission of sin. The colt did not carry the multitude’s expectations on its back; it bore Jesus. We, too, must carry on our backs not people’s demands and applause but the will of the King who saves.

## Between excuses for drawing back and greed disguised as devotion

Among the cords that bind us there is also the thought, ‘I cannot.’ It sounds like humility, but at times it becomes a word that trusts one’s own judgment more than the Lord’s power. The colt did not produce by itself the ability to bear the King. The Lord chose it, the disciples laid their garments on it, and the Lord sat on it. When the Lord uses a person, He also supplies the strength and wisdom that are needed. Therefore we need not recklessly volunteer for great work, nor need we keep refusing the small work entrusted to us. We have only to learn the gospel accurately, pray, consult together, and be faithful starting from

what we can do. The fact that the Lord will use us is not a word that makes us boast of our ability but a word that makes us believe the Lord's sufficiency.

Conversely, we must not use the word that the Lord has need of us for our own greed either. One cannot irresponsibly abandon his family or neglect the just duties of his workplace and call that devotion. Impulsively giving up everything and then shifting the burden onto others is not faith either. The loosing spoken of in this word does not mean cutting off all the relationships of the world; it means letting no relationship become a master above Jesus. The person who belongs to the Lord rather loves more at home, is more honest at his workplace, and is more faithful in the church. Only, when the world's interests collide with the gospel, he must clearly choose whose servant he is.

## We must decide today what we will carry on our backs as we live

We must examine what we are already carrying on our backs as we live. Does anxiety about money set the direction of the day? Do we move only when there is people's praise? Is a past failure still binding every possibility even now? Or, though our religious activities are many, do we want to display our own name rather than Jesus? The Lord does not give us these questions only to condemn us. He speaks in order to loose what is tied and bring us to Himself. The gospel causes the person who has been loosed and saved from sin not to become a slave of his own desires again, but to bear with joy the King who saved him.

The ways the Lord uses us can differ from one another. One teaches the Word, another quietly looks after the church, and

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another is not ashamed of the gospel in the place of his livelihood. One serves the way of the gospel with literature, another with conversation, another with material things and time. Not everyone has to do the same work. But all saints have the same center: the master of my life is not I, nor man, nor the world, but Jesus Christ. We must not shut up the grace we have received only within ourselves, but express it as fruit that gives life to souls. Even if the place the Lord has entrusted looks small, if it is a road walked bearing Him, it is never insignificant.

Let us think of what we can actually do today to respond to the calling. First, before the Word, we must put a name to what is binding us. We must see whether we truly have no time at all, or whether we are giving all our good hours to other desires. We must also look honestly at whether we really have no ability, or whether we are drawing back for fear of failing and being evaluated. Then, rather than making big decisions alone, consult with members who know the gospel and settle on a small task you can take on. You can begin by praying regularly for one person, reading the Word to him, and keeping what you have promised. Just as the Lord did not drive the colt to a far place all at once but Himself rode it and went along the road, so also when He entrusts work to us, He accompanies us with the Word and the Holy Spirit.

Beloved fellow believers, do not try to make yourselves useful people in order to be saved. First believe the gospel, that Jesus removed all your sins with the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. If you have already believed that gospel and received the remission of sin, then do not stay tied up gazing only at your own lack. Discern by the Word what is important and what is passing away. When the Lord asks of you a small obedience for the gospel and the church, respond in faith. Stand not as a servant dragged along by force,

but as a steward who knows the grace that saved him.

The glory of the colt did not lie in its becoming king itself. Its true glory lay in bearing Jesus the King and being used on His road. Our glory is the same. It lies not in being exalted above people, but in the Lord who saved sinners being revealed through our lives. I hope you will become people of faith who, when the Lord says, *"Loose it and bring it" (Mark 11:2)*, are loosed by the word of the gospel, and who, when He says, *"The Lord has need of it" (Mark 11:3)*, offer themselves with thanksgiving. Bearing on our backs the humble King who first saved us, let us walk to the very end the road on which His name is praised. ✉

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Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

# The Lord who passes the leaves and seeks fruit

**< Mark 11:11-25 >**

**"And Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve. Now the next day, when they had come out from Bethany, He was hungry. And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, 'Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.' And His disciples heard it. So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. Then He taught, saying to them, 'Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'' And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching. When evening had come, He went out of the city. Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.' So Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have faith in**

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**God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. 'And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."**

## The sign of placing the fig tree and the temple side by side

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He first looked around at all things in the temple. As the hour grew late He went out to Bethany, and the next day, on the road, He saw a fig tree that had leaves. He went near, but there was nothing except leaves. After Jesus spoke to that tree, He went into the temple, drove out those who bought and sold, and overturned the tables and the seats. The next day the disciples saw that fig tree dried up from the roots. Mark places what happened in the temple in the middle of the story of the fig tree. The tree that has leaves but no fruit, and the religion that is outwardly a temple but has departed from God's will, mirror each other.

The passage does not hide the fact that it was not the season for figs. Therefore we must not say that Jesus did not know the way of nature, or that He simply became angry because He was hungry. We cannot interpret the Lord's action by lowering it to something like human caprice. Nor must this event be used as a ground for hating any particular people. Through the sign He performed for the disciples to hear and see, the passage reveals

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the danger of a faith that is leaves only, and the authority of the Word. The Lord, the Creator, spoke, and the fact that the tree dried up from the roots according to that word appeared before the disciples.

## The Lord seeks not the amount of activity but fruit

Leaves can be seen even from far away. They make a tree look abundant and alive. But what the hungry Lord needed was not the size or shape of the leaves but fruit. In faith, too, there are many leaves that show well from a distance. The number of times one has attended worship, the office one holds, long church experience, Bible knowledge, and the amount of prayer and service done before people are visible to the eye. This does not mean that such things are bad in themselves. The problem is when they take the place of the fruit of life. It is dangerous to cover a heart that has not believed the gospel with a religious appearance, and, while seeking people's recognition more than God, to feel secure because the leaves are many.

When Jesus entered the temple, too, there was much activity on the outside. People came and went, goods were traded, money was changed, and doves were sold. When things are busy and large in scale, they can look alive. But the Lord did not look at the amount of activity and praise it. He asked what the temple was for. He taught, *"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'?" (Mark 11:17)* The temple was to be a place where God's name is sought and all nations come to God, but it had become a channel for filling man's greed and promoting his convenience. Religious activity that has lost its purpose is like a tree whose leaves are lush but which has no fruit.

The Lord drove out those who bought and sold in the temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. Nor did He allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. This shows that the Lord counted restoring God's will more important than preserving the calm of outward appearance. We may say we love the Lord and yet dislike having what we are used to shaken. But the Lord is not an ornament that preserves our religious habits as they are. If there is anything that clouds the gospel and blocks souls, He exposes it, and He sets things right so that the house of prayer may become a house of prayer again.

The chief priests and the scribes heard this teaching and did not examine themselves. Instead, they plotted how they might destroy Jesus. The passage makes clear that the multitude was astonished at the Lord's teaching, and that because of this the chief priests and the scribes feared Jesus. Here, too, is the contrast of leaves and fruit. They were the religious leaders in charge of the temple, but when the Son of God spoke, they did not submit before His word; they looked for a way to destroy Him. A high religious position does not automatically produce the fruit of faith. True fruit appears not in pushing the Lord away to protect one's own thoughts when His word is heard, but in acknowledging one's wrong before the Word and turning back.

## The object of faith is not my conviction but God

The next day Peter was amazed to see the tree dried up. It was not merely that the outer leaves had wilted; it was dried up from the roots. When Peter spoke of that fact, Jesus first said, *"Have faith in God."* This answer is important. The Lord did not tell the disciples to believe in the size of their own faith. Neither

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did He tell them to manufacture strong emotions or to repeat confident words many times. The object of faith is God. That the word spoken to the tree was fulfilled just so was not because of a technique of speaking, but because the One who spoke is the Creator. The life of faith begins not from self-suggestion but from believing God and His word.

If we read the Bible merely as an old religious story, the Word cannot set our direction today. But if we believe that the One who spoke this Word is the living God and that the written Word is the truth, the standard of our life changes. Circumstances keep changing, and people's evaluations differ from morning to evening. What looked possible today may be blocked tomorrow, and what we feared may unexpectedly be resolved. The person who looks only at circumstances is shaken like a reed, but the person who believes the Word can discern what to follow. It is not because he believes that everything will turn out in the shape he wants, but because he believes the fact that God's will and promises are surely fulfilled.

Jesus went on to speak the word about the mountain being lifted up and cast into the sea, and the word to believe that what we pray for and ask has been received. If we turn these words into a formula that automatically fulfills worldly desires, we miss the center of the passage. Faith is not a power that makes God submit to my wishes. It is not doubting the fact that God is able, and the fact that He surely accomplishes what He has spoken. Before the disciples, on the road of preaching the gospel, obstacles like mountains that human strength could not move would be laid. They had to pray believing not in their own ability but in the living God.

Therefore the word to believe that we have received is not a teaching that if we vividly picture in our minds the things and the success we want, they come into our hands. Prayer is the act

by which the person who believes the Word entrusts his needs, fears, and hopes to God. God is wise and good, and He is the One who accomplishes His will. We can ask that the gospel be delivered to souls, that the church stand on the truth, and that the saints who have received the remission of sin live by faith. We can also ask for the help and wisdom needed in hardship. And even when the circumstances before our eyes have not yet changed, we can walk the road given to us, believing that God has heard. This is prayer that is not dragged about by circumstances.

## The fruit of reconciliation comes from a heart that has received the remission of sin

We must also note that right after the word on prayer comes the exhortation concerning forgiveness. Jesus said that when we stand praying, if we have anything against anyone, we should forgive him. To claim to believe God while living with hatred for one's brother and a heart of revenge does not fit with fruitful faith. Yet we must not make forgiveness between people the same thing as the atonement Jesus accomplished. The act of our forgiving another person does not remove the sin of the world. The ground of the remission of sin is solely Jesus' work of salvation. But the person who has received that great remission of sin is called to bear the fruit of mercy and reconciliation when he deals with the one who has wronged him.

Here we must make clear the root of the fruit. Man does not obtain salvation by living a good life and forgiving others. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all our sins; on the Cross He received the judgment of those sins and died; and He rose from the dead. For the person who believes this gospel

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in his heart, all sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. The remission of sin is not something completed anew each day by our good deeds. We receive it by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished once and for all. When this perfect salvation becomes the root of the heart, the actual fruits of prayer, forgiveness, and obedience come forth.

That the remission of sin was accomplished once and for all does not mean that the person who has received the remission of sin never does wrong in the flesh again. Even the righteous have weakness, and shortcomings appear in their thoughts, words, and deeds. When we have done wrong, we must honestly acknowledge it, turn back, and set the relationship right. But it is not that each time this happens, Jesus' work of salvation has become insufficient and the remission of sin must be received all over again from the beginning. Living while confirming daily, through the Word, the remission of sin already accomplished, and renewing one's faith, is different from obtaining the remission of sin itself over and over. When the root is set down in the perfect gospel, we walk on again in faith without having to hide our own lack.

Leaves-only religion tries to make the shape of fruit without this root of the gospel. To a heart in which sin remains as it is, it attaches service, offerings, and asceticism, and tries to look before people as though its faith were good. But however many leaves a person hangs on himself, he cannot remove sin by his own works. Conversely, making the claim of having received the remission of sin by grace into an excuse for not having to obey is not the fruit of the gospel either. Faith follows this order: first receiving salvation as a gift, and then serving God because of the grace received. Works are not the root of salvation, but from living faith comes the fruit of thanksgiving.

## Only when our spiritual eyes are brightened can we discern leaves from fruit

Only when our spiritual eyes are brightened can we live the life of faith rightly. In Mark chapter 8, when a blind man first opened his eyes, he saw people dimly, as something like trees walking, and when the Lord laid His hands on him again, he saw all things clearly. We, too, if we look only at the outward form of religion, can confuse leaves with fruit. We can suppose that if a church is large and its activities are many, God is automatically pleased, and think that if a person looks good, his problem of sin has been solved. For our spiritual eyes to be brightened is to realize the meaning of Jesus bearing sins with His baptism and being judged on the Cross, and to see clearly what my salvation is grounded on.

When we know the gospel clearly, we realize that the words of the Bible are not stories unrelated to us. The word spoken toward the fig tree is not a tool for condemning another's hypocrisy; it makes us inspect the root of our own faith. The cleansing of the temple does not merely make us criticize the wrongs of other churches; it makes us look back at my own heart and at the purpose of the community we serve. The command to have faith in God does not make us judge that others have no faith; it makes us ask what I now trust more, between circumstances and people's words. The word to believe that we have received is not a slogan that feeds greed; it makes us believe God's will and pray.

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## Let us examine the leaves of my faith and of our church

What leaves are there in our personal faith? One can sit in worship and yet not listen to the Word. One can say many words of prayer and yet in reality trust only his own calculations. One can serve while seeking people's praise, and claim to know the gospel while loving not even one person. Conversely, there are those whose visible activities are few but who treasure the Word, acknowledge their wrongs, love the people in their charge, and hold on to the gospel in hardship. The Lord does not count only the visible amount. He looks at whether the heart has taken root in the gospel, and whether the obedience that believes the Word appears in actual life.

The church, too, must stand before the same question. The mere fact of having many schedules, organization, and finances does not make it a house of prayer. At the center of the church there must be prayer that seeks God and the gospel that gives life to sinners. A newly arrived soul must not learn only human systems but must hear the remission of sin that Jesus accomplished. The saints must not see one another as competitors but serve with the grace they have received. If money and convenience come before the gospel, or a leader's face becomes more important than the truth, it must be set right with the heart of the Lord who overturned the tables. The Lord's cleansing hand is not meant to tear the church down; it is grace that restores its original purpose.

## Entrust the outcome to God and tend the root

The person who believes the Word sets his direction clearly.

Even when the world is dark and those who respond to the gospel look few, he believes that the Word of God does not return void. Even when he has preached the gospel to a soul and no change is immediately visible, he does not merely lose heart. We cannot forcibly change a person's heart, but we sow the seed, believing that God works through the Word. Even before an obstacle as big as a mountain, he prays, without stopping to measure the size of his own strength. And he steadily carries on the work God has entrusted. True faith is not an excitement that denies reality but a continual walking that depends on God, who is greater than reality.

There was once news from a coworker that, after giving gospel books to people he knew, he was disappointed because they did not seem to understand enough. When we have explained the gospel with all our strength and the other person says something absurd or shows no response, we too easily lose heart. At such times we must think again about who it is that produces the fruit. The evangelist must deliver the Word accurately and wait with love, but he cannot force open a person's heart. God knows each heart and accomplishes His will through the Word. Therefore we must not doubt the power of the gospel because the response is slow, nor change the Word in order to produce visible numbers. The patience that entrusts the outcome to God and preaches truthfully is also a fruit of the faith that believes God.

Fruit does not mean only grand achievements. Repentance that lays down its stubbornness before the Word, choosing forgiveness after having held on to a wound, keeping honesty even in hardship, not being ashamed of the gospel, looking after a discouraged member, and serving the church's small needs with joy—these are fruit. We do not buy salvation with this fruit; we bear it because we have already been saved. Therefore we

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must not rashly judge whether someone is saved by looking at his amount of activity. We must only examine honestly whether my faith is leading on to thanksgiving, love, and obedience.

While waiting for fruit, we must tend the root. If, growing impatient because there is no visible result, we artificially attach leaves, we may receive people's praise for a moment, but it cannot take the place of life. Reading the Word, engraving the gospel on the heart, praying honestly, and obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit sometimes look small and slow. But the deeper the root goes, the clearer the direction of faith becomes, even when circumstances shake. The fruit the Lord seeks is not a record hastily produced before people, but a true life that appears in its season from a heart that believes God. Rather than comparing the shapes of our fruit with one another, we must first examine whether my root reaches the gospel.

## Take root in the gospel, so that you do not dry up from the roots

The word that the fig tree dried up from the roots gives us a solemn warning. Holding only the leaves of religion without the gospel cannot give eternal life. The memory of having attended church a long time, or the reputation of being a good person, cannot remove sin. If there is still sin in your heart, before decorating the outside any further, you must hear the gospel Jesus accomplished with the water and the Spirit. You must lay down your own righteousness, believe in your heart Jesus' baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and receive the remission of sin. The Lord did not stop at exposing the fruitless state; He has already completed the way for the sinner to take root in true life.

If you are a saint who has already received the remission of sin, do not receive this warning only as self-condemnation. Each time you see the lack of your flesh, do not be shaken into thinking you have not been saved; set your heart again on the completed gospel. And clear away the empty leaves the Lord points out. Lay down activities meant for show and actually pray. If there is someone against whom you hold something, reach out your hand first within the gospel. If there is an obedience you have been putting off because of people's evaluations, believe the Word and begin. Fruit is not an ornament forced out of anxiety, but a life that responds in faith when the Holy Spirit leads through the Word.

Beloved fellow believers, today also the Lord looks not only at our leaves but at our root and our fruit. Before the Lord, who looked around at all things in the temple, there is no religious exterior that can be hidden. But this fact does not give only fear to the person who believes the gospel. For the One who examines us is the very Savior who bore all sins, was judged and died, and rose again. He does not leave us as people with only leaves; He causes us to bear actual fruit through the Word and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, first, have faith in God. Believe the Lord's word more than the rise and fall of emotions or the circumstances before your eyes. Offer prayer that seeks God's will, not an incantation for fulfilling desires. Hold firmly to the remission of sin received once and for all, forgive people by that grace, preach the gospel, and live honestly in the place you are charged with. Let us seek fruit to offer the Lord rather than the praise that our leaves are many. Let us make the house of prayer a house of prayer again, and let our hearts take deep root in the gospel. I hope we will walk to the very end, unshaken, with the faith that believes God, who fulfills just as He has spoken. ✉

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# CHAPTER

# 12

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# Mark Chapter 12

**< Mark 12:1-44 >**

**“Then He began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But those vinedressers said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. ‘Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: ‘The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes’?’ And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away. Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, we know**

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**that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him. Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.' Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that**

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**He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him. Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'' Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him gladly. Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.' Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which**

**make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'"**

## 1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 12 begins with Jesus exposing, through the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard, the sin of the religious leaders who rejected God's servants and His beloved Son. The religious leaders question Jesus about taxes, the resurrection, and the commandments in order to trap Him, but Jesus reveals their hypocrisy and their misunderstanding of the Scriptures and teaches the will of God. The things that are Caesar's must be rendered to Caesar and the things that are God's to God, and God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. The greatest commandment of all is to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself. Jesus also reveals that the Christ is not merely David's descendant but the One whom David called *"Lord."* Finally, He warns against the scribes, who exploited weak people with godliness meant to be seen by others, and through the two mites the poor widow offered, He teaches the fact that God looks not at the amount of an offering but at his faith, the center of his heart, and his devotion.

### 1. The owner who entrusted the vineyard to vinedressers (verse 1)

Jesus told the parable of a man who made a vineyard, set a

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hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat, built a tower, then leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. The owner of the vineyard prepared everything needed for the vineyard to bear fruit and entrusted it to the vinedressers.

In this parable the owner of the vineyard refers to God, the vineyard refers to the people God cared for and wanted to bear fruit, and the vinedressers refer to the religious leaders who were to take charge of the people and serve them. God did not give the leaders ownership of the vineyard; He entrusted them with the responsibility to care for it rightly.

But the vinedressers acted as if they themselves were the owners. When God entrusts authority and office to a person, it does not mean that he is to fulfill his own desires; it means that he is to serve faithfully according to God's will. When the one entrusted forgets the owner's will, he comes to use what is God's as if it were his own possession.

**2. The vinedressers who beat and killed the servants the owner sent (verses 2–5)**

When the time came to gather the fruit, the owner sent a servant to receive some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers seized that servant, beat him severely, and sent him away empty-handed. When the owner sent another servant, they wounded him in the head and insulted him. Another servant they killed, and many of those sent afterward they also beat or killed.

The servants the owner sent represent the prophets, who were sent to deliver the Word of God. God sent His servants many times so that the people might turn from the wrong way and bear the fruit of righteousness and faith. But the people and their leaders hated to hear the words that pointed out their sins, and they persecuted the prophets and even killed them.

The evil of the vinedressers was not a momentary mistake. Though the owner sent servants again and again, they kept doing violence. This shows at the same time God's longsuffering and man's stubbornness. God did not judge at once but gave them chances to return again and again, yet the vinedressers did not receive that longsuffering as an opportunity for repentance.

**3. The vinedressers who killed even the beloved son (verses 6–8)**

The owner still had one person, his beloved son. Thinking, *"They will respect my son,"* the owner sent him last. But the vinedressers, knowing that the son was the heir, discussed together killing him and taking the vineyard for themselves. In the end they seized the son, killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

The beloved son refers to Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus is not one among many prophets but the only Son whom God sent. The religious leaders saw Jesus' words and the works He did, yet they did not acknowledge His authority. Instead, they tried to remove Jesus in order to protect their own position and authority.

The vinedressers thought that if they killed the son, they could take the vineyard for themselves. But the act of killing the heir revealed all the more clearly the fact that the vineyard was not theirs and the fact that they were defying the owner's authority. Man cannot take God's place by rejecting Jesus. To reject Jesus is to reject God, who sent Him.

**4. The judgment of the vinedressers, and the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone (verses 9–12)**

Jesus said that the owner of the vineyard would come and

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destroy the wicked vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. The vinedressers, who abandoned the responsibility entrusted to them and killed the owner's servants and his son, could not escape judgment in the end.

The word that the vineyard would be given to others should be understood to mean not that a whole particular people is unconditionally cast off, but that God judges the leaders who bore no fruit and abused their authority, and entrusts that work to people who will carry it out faithfully. The status of having been entrusted with God's work does not in itself let anyone escape judgment.

Jesus quoted Psalm 118 and said that the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. The religious leaders tried to throw Jesus away like a useless stone, but God established Him as the cornerstone that becomes the center of the history of salvation. Even if people reject Jesus, God's will does not collapse.

The leaders knew that this parable was spoken pointing at them. Yet they did not repent but tried to seize Jesus. When one hears the Word and realizes his own sin, the response that is needed is not to remove the One who delivered the Word but to acknowledge his wrong and turn back.

### 5. The attempt to trap Jesus with the question of taxes (verses 13–15)

The religious leaders sent people from among the Pharisees and the Herodians to find fault with Jesus' words and accuse Him. The two groups differed in political inclination, but they cooperated with each other in the aim of removing Jesus.

They first praised Jesus, saying that He does not regard the person of men but truly teaches the way of God. But this was not a confession from a sincere heart; it was flattery meant to

put Jesus off His guard. They asked whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar.

If He answered that they should pay the tax, He could be made to lose the support of the people, who hated Roman rule; and if He answered that they should not pay, He could be accused as a rebel against Rome. Whichever way He answered, it was a carefully devised trap to put Jesus in difficulty. But Jesus knew their hypocrisy.

**6. Rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (verses 15–17)**

Jesus had them bring a denarius and asked whose image and inscription were on the coin. When the people answered that they were Caesar's, Jesus said, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

On Roman money the image and the name of Caesar were engraved. Those who used that money and lived under the institutions and the protection of the state had the social responsibility to pay due taxes. Jesus did not teach people to refuse all social responsibility on the ground that they serve God.

But the authority of the state cannot take the place of the authority of God. What belongs to Caesar is to be returned to Caesar, but what belongs to God must surely be given to God. When we consider that, just as Caesar's image was engraved on the coin, man was made in the image of God, we can also find the meaning that not only taxes but man's heart and his whole life belong to God.

This word does not mean unconditional obedience to every demand of the state. Responsibility toward the state also stands under God's will and authority. A person must faithfully carry out his social duties, yet he must not hand over to any other

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power the faith, the worship, and the obedience that are to be given to God.

### 7. The question of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection (verses 18–23)

The Sadducees, who claim that there is no resurrection, came to Jesus. On the basis of the institution of levirate marriage recorded in Deuteronomy, they asked whose wife a woman would be at the resurrection if she had married seven brothers in turn.

Levirate marriage was an institution by which, when a man died without children, his brother married the wife left behind and raised up offspring to continue the dead man's line. The Sadducees applied this institution to an extreme hypothetical situation to make the faith of the resurrection look contradictory.

Their question was not a question for learning the truth of the resurrection but a question for mocking and denying the resurrection. They presupposed that life after the resurrection would also continue in exactly the same manner as the present world. A question that starts from a wrong premise cannot arrive at understanding God's truth.

### 8. The misunderstanding of those who knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (verses 24–27)

Jesus said that the Sadducees were mistaken in their thinking because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. They quoted the Scriptures, but they did not realize the will of God to which the whole of Scripture testifies.

He said that when people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage as in their life on earth, but are like the angels in heaven. This does not mean that man

becomes an angel; it means that life after the resurrection differs from the present life, in which the generations must be continued through death, childbirth, and marriage. God has the power to raise the dead and change them into a completely new state of life.

Jesus quoted the word God spoke to Moses: *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* These patriarchs had died physically long before the time of Moses, but God still said that He is their God.

God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. The death of the body cannot end a person's existence or God's promise. God raises His people again and completes the promises He made to them. To deny the resurrection is to limit not only the Scriptures but also the power of God, who overcomes death.

### 9. The greatest commandments: loving God and loving one's neighbor (verses 28–34)

One of the scribes heard Jesus' answer and asked which is the first of all the commandments. Jesus answered with the word *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one,"* telling him to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength.

To love God is not to give God only a part of one's life. It is to exalt God highest with one's whole person, including heart, life, thought, and ability, and to obey His Word. God is not one among many objects; He is the only Lord, and so He must receive the foremost love and loyalty.

As the second commandment, Jesus said to love one's neighbor as oneself. Love for God and love for one's neighbor are not separated. Claiming to love the invisible God while despising and harming the person before one's eyes cannot be

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called true faith.

The scribe agreed with this word and answered that to love God and to love one's neighbor is better than all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices. Seeing that he answered wisely, Jesus said that he was not far from the kingdom of God.

But to be not far from the kingdom of God and to have actually entered that kingdom are not the same. Knowing the meaning of the commandments rightly is important, but knowledge alone is not enough. A person must realize the fact that he cannot keep the commandment of love perfectly by his own strength, believe in Jesus, whom God sent, and go forward to a life of loving God and his neighbor within the grace he has received.

**10. The Christ is David's Son and at the same time David's Lord (verses 35–37)**

Teaching in the temple, Jesus asked why the scribes say only that the Christ is the Son of David. That the Christ comes from David's lineage is a fact recorded in the Scriptures, but that alone could not explain the whole of the Christ's identity.

Jesus quoted the word of Psalm 110: *"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"* If David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ *"my Lord,"* then the Christ cannot remain merely a human descendant born after David.

As a man, Jesus came from David's lineage, but He is the Lord who exists before David and receives David's worship. The Christ is not merely a human king who would politically restore Israel but the Savior who has the authority of God. Many people heard Jesus' words gladly.

### 11. The warning against the scribes, who acted hypocritically and exploited weak people (verses 38–40)

Jesus said to beware of the scribes, who like going around in long robes, being greeted in the marketplaces, and having the best seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts. The problem was not the robes or the act of receiving greetings itself, but the heart that sought to be honored by people and to exalt itself through such things.

Outwardly they looked like godly people, but they devoured the possessions of widows. They did not serve the weak, who should have been protected; they used their religious authority to take away their property. They also prayed at length in order to look godly before people.

The length of the prayer was not the problem; the problem was that they made prayer, which is for communing with God, a means of being recognized by people. God sees not only the outward appearance but also the motives and deeds hidden behind it. The person who covers greed and exploitation with religious words and deeds receives a more severe judgment.

### 12. The large offerings of the rich and the widow's two mites (verses 41–44)

Jesus sat opposite the offering box of the temple and watched people putting money into it. Many rich people put in much money, but one poor widow came and put in two mites, a very small amount.

Jesus called His disciples and said that this widow had put in more than all the others. The rich gave a part out of their abundance, but the widow, in her poverty, gave her whole livelihood. By man's calculation the widow's offering was the smallest, but in the faith and the devotion God sees, it was the greatest.

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God does not look only at the absolute amount of an offering; He looks at the heart with which and the circumstances in which it was given. The widow's two mites show that it is not the case that one must have much in order to serve God. She did not merely give a small possession; she entrusted her whole living to God.

This word must not be used as a ground for pressuring poor people to offer their whole livelihood. Immediately before this, Jesus rebuked the scribes who devour the possessions of widows. To demand wealth by using the faith and devotion of the weak is the exact opposite of Jesus' teaching.

The passage contrasts the scribes, who dressed up a godly appearance to be seen by people while exploiting widows, with the widow, who, though receiving no one's attention, trusted God and gave truthfully. Before God, the worth of true faith appears not in social position or the size of one's wealth but in humble faith and a true center of the heart.

**The core meaning of Mark chapter 12**

First, God entrusted His people and His work to the leaders, but the one entrusted is not the owner; he is a steward who must serve faithfully.

Second, God sent even His beloved Son to those who had rejected the prophets, but the religious leaders tried to kill Jesus in order to keep their own authority.

Third, Jesus, rejected by people, became the cornerstone of salvation that God established, and whoever rejects Him cannot escape God's judgment.

Fourth, believers must faithfully carry out their social responsibilities, but they must not forget the fact that their heart, their faith, and their whole life belong to God.

Fifth, God is not the God of the dead but the God of the

living, and with the power that raises the dead He completes the promises He made to His people.

Sixth, the center of all the commandments is to love God with one's whole person and to love one's neighbor as oneself.

Seventh, the Christ is not One who remains a human descendant of David; He is the Savior who has the authority of God, the One whom David called *"Lord."*

Eighth, the faith that exalts itself with godliness meant to be seen by people and exploits weak people receives severe judgment before God.

Ninth, God looks at faith and the center of the heart more than the amount that is given, and He counts precious such true devotion as the poor widow's two mites.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 12 is the chapter that exposes the sin of the religious leaders who rejected the Son of God and exalted themselves with outward godliness, while revealing that Jesus is the Lord who has the authority of the resurrection and of salvation, and teaching the fact that we must truly love God and our neighbor and, like the poor widow, entrust our lives to God with humble faith.

## 2) Mark chapter 12 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 12 shows through the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard the fact that God sent His beloved Son, Jesus Christ, but the religious leaders rejected Him and tried to kill Him. In the disputes that follow, it becomes clear that man cannot know God's will with his knowledge and his own righteousness, and that only by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished and receiving the remission of sin can he

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enter a right relationship with God. Jesus is the Son of God, who bore the sin of the world, was judged on the Cross, and then rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel and has his sins washed away receives the Holy Spirit, comes alive spiritually, calls God Father, and comes to love God and his neighbor and serve the Lord with a true heart.

**1. The wicked vinedressers who rejected the beloved son (verses 1–8)**

The owner of the vineyard sent several servants so that the vinedressers would hand over the fruit, but the vinedressers beat, insulted, and killed the servants. Last of all the owner sent even his beloved son, but the vinedressers killed that son as well, in order to take the vineyard, and cast him out of the vineyard.

The owner represents God, the servants represent the prophets God sent, and the beloved son represents Jesus Christ. God did not abandon humankind fallen in sin but kept sending servants who would deliver His Word. At last He sent the Son of God, but the religious leaders rejected Jesus in order to protect their own authority and their own righteousness.

The purpose for which the Son of God came to this earth was not only to judge sinners but to save them from sin. Jesus received all the sins of humankind passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and bore them; carrying those sins, He was judged on the Cross, shedding His blood; and He rose from the dead three days after He died.

But the person who has the same heart as the vinedressers does not accept God’s salvation. He does not acknowledge the fact that he is a sinner and the fact that human works cannot remove sin, and he holds on to his own religious zeal and righteousness. If one claims to believe in Jesus and yet does not

accept the remission of sin He accomplished, he is repeating the stubbornness of the vinedressers, who cast the beloved son out of the vineyard.

The fruit God wants is not religious merit that man produces by his own strength. It is receiving the remission of sin by believing the salvation the Son of God accomplished, and bearing the fruit of thanksgiving, obedience, and the preaching of the gospel that comes from that faith.

**2. The rejected stone becoming the chief cornerstone (verses 9–12)**

The religious leaders threw Jesus away like a useless stone, but God established Him as the cornerstone of salvation. The chief cornerstone is the important stone that determines the direction and the stability of the building. This means that what Jesus accomplished is the only foundation of all salvation.

The baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist was not merely a ceremony for beginning His public ministry. Just as in the sacrifices of the Old Testament the sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed his sins to it, it was the event in which the sins of everyone in the world passed on to Jesus through John the Baptist, the representative of humankind. The blood of the Cross was His receiving in our place the punishment of the sins He had so borne, and the resurrection shows that Jesus overcame the power of sin and death and completed salvation.

Therefore the water, the blood, and the Spirit do not speak of salvations separated from one another. The water testifies to the sin of the world passing on to Jesus; the blood testifies to the judgment of that sin; and the Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and that the salvation He accomplished is the truth. Jesus is already the cornerstone of salvation that God has established.

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A person must believe all three of these testimonies and stand by faith on the salvation Jesus completed.

Even if a person piles up many good deeds, prayers, and religious experiences, if he throws away this cornerstone he cannot build the house of salvation. Conversely, even if he has no merit of his own at all, if he fully believes the salvation Jesus accomplished, he comes to stand on the unshakable foundation of salvation.

**3. Give to God the things that are God's (verses 13–17)**

The Pharisees and the Herodians tried to trap Jesus with the question of paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus knew their hypocrisy and said, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

Even a person who has received the remission of sin must carry out just social responsibilities, such as taxes and the order of law, while he lives in this world. Believing the gospel does not mean refusing every responsibility one bears in the world. The believer must live honestly and faithfully in his family, his workplace, and society.

But man's life, heart, and faith belong to God. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all our sins, and on the Cross He paid His own life as the price and saved us. Therefore the saved person is no longer a person who lives only for sin and his own desires but a person who belongs to God.

To give to God the things that are God's does not mean giving only a part of one's money or worship time. It is first to believe the salvation God accomplished and give Him one's heart, and to use one's body, time, talents, and life for the gospel. This is not a condition or price for obtaining the remission of sin but the fruit of faith that the person already

saved without price bears with thanksgiving.

**4. God is the God of the living (verses 18–27)**

The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, tried to make the resurrection look like a contradictory teaching by citing the marriage relationship of seven brothers and one woman. Jesus said that they were greatly mistaken because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Life after the resurrection is not a life in which the present bodily order is repeated as it is. Man does not become an angel; he rises in a spiritual body that, like the angels, no longer enters into the marriage premised on death and childbirth. God has the power to raise the dead.

The word *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living"* is connected not only with the resurrection of the body but also with spiritual life. Every person is born a descendant of Adam and is in a state of spiritual death because of sin. Even if he is physically alive and leads a religious life, if there is sin in his heart, he is spiritually dead before God.

The way for a person to come alive spiritually is not to reduce his sins by his own efforts but to believe in his heart the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. When he believes this gospel, all the sins of his heart are washed away, the Holy Spirit comes upon the sinless heart, and that person is born again as a child of God.

God becomes the Father and the Savior of the person who has thus received the remission of sin and come alive. The born-again person does not call God only a far-off absolute being; he calls Him the Father, who saved him, protects him, and is with him. The Holy Spirit dwells in his heart and testifies to the fact that God is his Father.

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Jesus' death is the death for our sins, and Jesus' resurrection is the ground of the new life given to the believer. It is also the guarantee that in the future even the body will rise again. Therefore, to the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the resurrection is not a vague religious hope but a promise already secured in the living Jesus.

**5. The greatest commandment and man's limits (verses 28–34)**

Jesus said that to love God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's mind, and with all one's strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is the greatest commandment. Love for God and love for one's neighbor are the core of the whole Law.

But man, from his birth, has evil thoughts, greed, pride, hatred, and lewdness in the root of his heart, and so he cannot keep this commandment perfectly. He can act outwardly as if he loved his neighbor while hating him in his heart, and he can confess that he loves God while actually loving himself and the things of the world more.

The commandments were not given so that man might boast of his own righteousness; they make him realize that he is a sinner who cannot fully do God's will. The person who has discovered his sin before the Law should not try to become righteous by himself through working harder; he must seek the Savior, who has removed all his sins.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore all the sins a person commits in his whole life, and He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. Therefore salvation is not something received as the reward for having loved God and one's neighbor sufficiently; it is the gift received by believing the righteousness Jesus completed.

Only the person who has received the remission of sin and received the Holy Spirit at last comes to know God's love in his heart. He is not a person who tries to fill up the score of the commandments by his own strength; out of thanksgiving for the love he has first received, he loves God and serves his neighbor. Love is not a merit for obtaining salvation but the fruit that appears through the Holy Spirit in the person saved by believing the gospel.

That Jesus said to the scribe, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God,"* also shows that one does not enter the kingdom of God merely by knowing the content of the commandments. Even if one knows the truth of salvation at close range and acknowledges it, if he does not believe it with his own heart and receive the remission of sin, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

### 6. Jesus, David's descendant and at the same time David's Lord (verses 35–37)

Jesus asked how, if the Christ is David's descendant, David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ *"my Lord."* The Christ came from David's lineage according to the flesh, but He is God, who exists from the beginning.

If we understand Jesus only as an excellent human being or a great prophet, we cannot fully believe the salvation He accomplished. A mere human being can neither bear the sins of all humankind nor overcome death and rise again. Jesus is God and the Savior of all people.

Jesus, who is God, came in the body of a man and bore all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And in the sinner's place He received the judgment of the Cross and rose again. If Jesus were not God, His death would end as the death of one man; but because He is the Son

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of God the Creator, He completely redeemed the sins of all people with the baptism He received from John and the sacrifice of the Cross.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and God, and He confirms in the heart of the person who believes that the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood is true. Therefore we must believe Jesus as the true man who came as David's descendant and at the same time the true God who is David's Lord.

**7. The warning against outward godliness and self-righteousness (verses 38–40)**

The scribes liked going around in long robes, being greeted by people, and sitting in high seats. Outwardly they prayed at length, but behind the scenes they devoured the possessions of widows. Their godliness became a means of being recognized by people and filling their own desires rather than of serving God.

Man cannot wash away his sins through long prayers, good deeds, service, and offerings. Even if he confesses his sins daily and asks for the remission of sin, if he depends on that as the method of washing away sin, sin still remains in his heart. Repentance does not stop at acknowledging one's sins; it is turning from one's own righteousness and wrong faith and returning to the gospel God has completed.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus already took over all the sins of the world, and on the Cross He bore all the punishment of those sins. Trying to remove one's sins with one's own prayers and religious acts without believing this fact is exalting one's own righteousness above the righteousness of God.

True godliness does not lie in exalting oneself before

people. It lies in first believing the gospel and having all the sins of one's heart washed away, and then caring for weak people and living honestly, following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The person who has received the grace of salvation does not boast of his office or his deeds but gives all the glory to Jesus.

**8. The poor widow's two mites and the devotion of faith (verses 41–44)**

Many rich people put in much money out of their abundance, but the poor widow gave two mites, the whole of her livelihood. Jesus looked not at the amount of the offering but at the circumstances and the center of the one who gave, and He said that the widow had given the most.

It is not that the widow obtained the remission of sin because she gave much. No offering or sacrifice can take the place of a person's price of sin. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who is without sin, had to bear sin and be judged in our place.

Because Jesus paid the whole price of salvation with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the Cross, and the resurrection, the remission of sin is grace received without money and without price. It is not that man buys salvation by offering something to God; God first gave His only begotten Son and saved sinners.

The devotion of the person saved by believing the gospel comes out of thankfulness for grace. The widow's two mites were not an act meant to be seen by others but an expression of the faith that entrusted her life to God. God preciously receives even the small service offered in faith by a person who has no great wealth or outstanding ability.

But this word must not be used to force poor people to offer

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their whole livelihood. Immediately before this, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders who devour the possessions of widows. True gospel ministry does not use the faith of the weak; rather, it protects and serves them.

**The core meaning of the gospel of the water and the Spirit appearing in Mark chapter 12**

First, the beloved Son whom God sent is Jesus Christ, and to reject Him is to reject the righteousness of God, which He prepared to save sinners.

Second, Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose again, accomplishing perfect salvation.

Third, the ministry of the water and the blood that Jesus accomplished is the cornerstone of salvation, and man's works and religious merits cannot take the place of this foundation.

Fourth, the saved person is God's people, whom Jesus bought by paying the price of His life, and so he must live giving his heart and his life to God.

Fifth, God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, and He becomes the Father of the person who believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receives the remission of sin, and comes alive spiritually.

Sixth, Jesus' resurrection is the evidence that new life has been given to the believer and the guarantee that in the future his body, too, will rise again.

Seventh, love for God and love for one's neighbor are not conditions for obtaining the remission of sin but the fruit of faith that the person first saved by God's love bears as he follows the Holy Spirit.

Eighth, Jesus is David's descendant according to the flesh

but is originally God, and the Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and that the salvation He accomplished is true.

Ninth, outward godliness, the repeated confession of sins, and religious acts cannot wash away sin. Only when one believes the salvation Jesus completed does he receive the remission of all his sins.

Tenth, offerings and service are not a price paid to obtain salvation but the devotion of faith that the person who has already received the remission of sin without price offers to God in thanksgiving.

To sum up in one sentence, Mark chapter 12 is the chapter that teaches that since Jesus, the beloved Son whom God sent, bore all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and completed salvation with the Cross and the resurrection, a person must throw away his own righteousness and outward godliness, believe this gospel, receive the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit, come alive spiritually, and then love God and his neighbor and truly give his life to God. ✉

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Mark Chapter 12

# The Cornerstone that God has established

## Introduction

Mark chapter 12 contrasts the religious leaders, who rejected God's rights, with the Son of God, who was sent to them. The vinedressers of the vineyard beat and killed the servants the owner sent, and then killed even the beloved son he sent last. This parable exposes the unbelief of the leaders who rejected the prophets and finally tried to kill even Jesus. But God made Jesus, whom the builders rejected, the chief cornerstone, so that He becomes the foundation of salvation and life for the one who believes.

The Pharisees and the Herodians tried to trap Jesus with the question of paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus said to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. If Caesar's image was on the coin, God's image is engraved on man. The believer must fulfill his social responsibilities, but he must not exalt the state, wealth, or power above God.

The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, mocked the resurrection with a question of marriage. But Jesus rebuked them, saying that they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, and the hope of the resurrection rests on the power and the promise of God, who overcomes death.

Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to love God

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with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love one's neighbor as one's own body. But a sinner cannot keep this commandment perfectly and so become righteous. Jesus, who came as David's descendant, is at the same time the Son of God whom David called *"Lord."* With the baptism He received from John He bore all the sins of the world, was judged on the Cross, and rose again in three days, completing salvation. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sin, receives the Holy Spirit, and obtains new life with which to love God and his neighbor.

Jesus warned against the hypocrisy of the scribes, who displayed themselves with high seats and long prayers while devouring the possessions of widows. Then, seeing the poor widow put in two mites, He counted precious the heart that entrusted its whole living to God rather than its wealth. This word does not mean that unreasonable offerings should be forced on the poor. Mark chapter 12 asks for the heart that believes in the Son of God, the hope of the resurrection, and love and true devotion, rather than outward religiosity and many possessions. Faith built on Jesus the Cornerstone appears not in people's praise but in a life that pleases God.

## The vinedressers killed even the beloved son to seize the owner's rights, but God established the rejected Son as the cornerstone of salvation

*"Then He began to speak to them in parables: 'A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that he might receive some of the*

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*fruit of the vineyard from the vinedressers. And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Again he sent them another servant, and at him they threw stones, wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully treated. And again he sent another, and him they killed; and many others, beating some and killing some. Therefore still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those vinedressers said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they took him and killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. 'Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vinedressers, and give the vineyard to others. Have you not even read this Scripture: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes'?' And they sought to lay hands on Him, but feared the multitude, for they knew He had spoken the parable against them. So they left Him and went away" (Mark 12:1–12).*

Jesus spoke the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard to the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, who had been questioning His authority. This parable is not simply the story of wicked tenants who seized another's property. It was a word revealing what grace and responsibility God had given His people, and how the leaders in charge of that people had treated God's servants and His son.

A man made a vineyard, set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat, and built a tower. The owner did not merely plant vines and entrust the work to the vinedressers without any preparation. He made a fence to protect the vineyard from beasts and intruders, and prepared the equipment for gathering the fruit and pressing the juice, and even a tower from which to watch over the vineyard. He furnished every condition needed

for the vinedressers to bear fruit.

The owner of the vineyard represents God, and the vineyard represents the people and the nation God established and cared for by grace. God gave Israel the Law and the sacrificial system, sent them the prophets, and through them made His plan of salvation known to the world. This was not because the people of Israel were originally more righteous or superior to other peoples; it was a privilege received by God's choice and grace.

The vinedressers were not the owners of the vineyard but stewards entrusted with its cultivation. They were to care for the vineyard and, when the time came, return to the owner his share of the produce. But while the owner stayed long in a far country, they acted as if they were the owners of the vineyard. They mistook the authority entrusted to them for their own possession and put their own interests before the owner's will.

These vinedressers refer to the religious leaders who at that time were in charge of God's people and the temple. God had entrusted them with the responsibility of teaching the Word and leading the people to serve God. But they placed God's people under their own authority and used the temple and the religious system as means of protecting their position and their profit. Even when Jesus, the Owner of the temple, came, they did not receive Him but opposed Him, asking by what authority He did these things.

The fruit God sought in the vineyard was not the quantity of outward religious activity. It was the fruit of faith—believing God, obeying His Word, practicing justice and mercy, and receiving the Christ whom God sent. Even if the temple sacrifices and the teaching of the Law continued, if they rejected Jesus Christ, to whom all these things pointed, they had not borne the fruit God seeks.

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When the time to receive the produce came, the owner sent a servant to the vinedressers. But the vinedressers beat that servant severely and sent him back with nothing. When the owner sent another servant, they wounded him in the head and insulted him. Another they killed, and many of those sent afterward they also beat or killed. These servants represent the prophets God kept sending to turn His people back.

Whenever the people fell into sin and idolatry, God sent prophets to rebuke them and tell them to return. But the people accepted the words that were pleasant to hear while refusing the words that pointed out their sins and wrongs. They mocked, persecuted, and even killed the prophets. They acted as though God's Word would disappear if they removed the person who delivered it.

The fact that the owner did not send only one servant and then immediately judge the vinedressers shows God's longsuffering. Though the vinedressers beat and killed his servants, the owner sent other servants again. God does not delight in the destruction of the sinner, and He gives His word many times, allowing opportunities to turn back. But God's longsuffering does not mean that He condones sin or gives up judgment forever.

The owner had one person left to send last. He was the owner's beloved son. Thinking, *"They will respect my son,"* the owner sent him. This beloved son refers to the only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, whom God the Father sent into the world. After sending the prophets, God at last sent His own Son to speak salvation and reveal the Father's will completely.

The expression *"They will respect my son"* does not mean that God did not know that people would kill Jesus. Jesus said several times that He would be rejected by the religious leaders, be killed, and rise again in three days. This parable shows what

honor the Son of God ought to receive, and at the same time reveals how great was the evil of the vinedressers, who rejected even that son.

When the vinedressers saw the son, they said, *"This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours."* They knew that the son represented the owner's rights. Yet rather than respect him, they sought to kill him and take complete possession of the vineyard. This shows man's rebellion: enjoying what is God's while refusing to serve God as the Owner.

A person can enjoy the life, talents, and wealth God has given and yet think of them only as his own. The church, the offices in it, and the souls entrusted to one's care are not the possession of any leader. All belong to God, and a person is only a steward who takes charge of them and serves for a set time. When a leader makes people his own followers and uses the gospel to seek his own name and profit, he follows the way of the vinedressers, who tried to make the vineyard their own.

The vinedressers seized the owner's son, killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. This points to Jesus being rejected by the religious leaders of His own people, handed over into the hands of a Gentile ruler, and killed on the Cross. But Jesus was not a helpless victim seized without knowing what would happen. In obedience to the Father's will to save sinners, He gave up His own life of Himself.

That people killed the Son of God was clearly sin. Their evil choice does not turn into a good deed. But God did not let even human evil destroy His plan of salvation. People rejected Jesus and nailed Him to the Cross, but God made that death the means by which Jesus bore in our place the judgment that sinners deserved.

Before going to the Cross, Jesus bore the sins of everyone

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in the world on His own body with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River. The beloved Son of God, who is without sin, received all our sins onto Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of humankind. Therefore Jesus' death on the Cross was not a death unrelated to sin; it was His receiving in our place the punishment of the sins of humankind, which He had borne with His baptism.

Carrying those sins, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, paying the price of sin completely. And He was buried, rose again in three days, and overcame sin and death. Whoever believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, becoming God's people.

The owner of the vineyard said that he would destroy the wicked vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. This means that God does not simply leave unbelief and evil alone, and that He surely judges leaders who abuse the authority entrusted to them. It also shows that the kingdom of God is not a possession automatically guaranteed to a particular lineage or religious position. The work of that kingdom is entrusted to people who believe the gospel and bear the fruit God wants.

This word must not be interpreted to mean that all Jews were cast off and only Gentiles were chosen. Jesus' disciples and many believers of the early church were also Jews. The object of the judgment is not lineage itself but the unbelief and the evil leadership that rejected the Son of God and treated the people entrusted to them as their own possession. God receives as His people whoever believes in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, whether Jew or Gentile.

Jesus quoted the Scripture: "*The stone which the builders*

*rejected Has become the chief cornerstone."* The builders threw away the stone they judged unfit for building. In the same way the religious leaders did not acknowledge Jesus as the Christ sent by God and tried to remove Him. But God established Jesus, whom they rejected, as the most important cornerstone of salvation and of the kingdom of God.

The chief cornerstone is the important stone that determines the direction and the stability of the building. Jesus is the only foundation of the kingdom of God and of the church. The church cannot be built on the ability or tradition of a particular leader, or on wealth and organization. It must be built on the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and every teaching and ministry must also be judged by the standard of this gospel.

That the rejected stone became the chief cornerstone was not accomplished by man's plan; it was the LORD's doing. People tried to end Jesus' influence by killing Him, but God raised Jesus from the dead. The Cross was not Jesus' defeat, and the resurrection revealed that God's plan of salvation had been completely accomplished. God exalted as the eternal Savior the Son whom people had rejected.

The religious leaders understood that this parable was spoken pointing at them. Yet they did not acknowledge their sin and turn back. Instead, they tried to seize Jesus. Understanding the meaning of the Word and repenting before that Word are different. A person can grasp the meaning of a sermon accurately and still oppose the truth because he does not want to give up his rights and his greed.

They wanted to seize Jesus but could not act because they feared the multitude. They did not fear God; they feared the people's reaction. Their standard of action was not truth and righteousness but whatever was advantageous for keeping their

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position. The fear of man cannot make anyone forsake sin; it only restrains the outward behavior for a while. True repentance is acknowledging one's wrong not before people's eyes but before the Word of God.

The fruit of the vineyard is not a price man pays to God in order to receive salvation. One must first believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, receive the remission of sin, and receive the Holy Spirit. The fruit of life then appears in the life of the person so saved. Being thankful for the salvation God has given, obeying the Word, and preaching the gospel to other souls so that they too may receive the remission of sin—this is the fruit that appears in the saved.

The person in charge of a church must not treat the souls, the finances, and the ministry entrusted to him as his own possession. Remembering that he is a steward working in the Lord's vineyard, he must serve so that the souls entrusted to him may know Jesus Christ accurately and believe the gospel. He must set people before the Word rather than subordinate them to his own authority, and exalt not his own name but the name of Jesus, who was rejected and yet became the chief cornerstone.

This section teaches that judgment surely comes on those to whom God entrusted great grace and responsibility, yet who turned that grace into their own possession and rejected even the Son of God. At the same time it delivers the good news that God established Jesus, rejected by man, as the cornerstone of salvation. The sinner must lay down his own righteousness and religious rights and believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed. The person who stands on that faith must not make God's vineyard his own but, as a faithful steward, preach the gospel and return the fruit of life to God.

## What bears Caesar's image is to be returned to Caesar, but man, made in the image of God, must return himself to God

*"Then they sent to Him some of the Pharisees and the Herodians, to catch Him in His words. When they had come, they said to Him, 'Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?' But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring Me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him" (Mark 12:13–17).*

The religious leaders knew that the parable of the vinedressers of the vineyard had been spoken pointing at them. But instead of acknowledging their wrong before the Word and turning back, they looked for a way to seize Jesus. Since the multitude was following Jesus, they could not arrest Him at once, and they sent people from among the Pharisees and the Herodians to find in His words a pretext for accusation.

The Pharisees and the Herodians were not groups politically close to each other. The Pharisees harbored hostility toward Roman rule and Gentile power, while the Herodians supported Herod's rule and cooperated with the Roman political system. People who could hold different positions even on the tax question joined hands under the aim of removing Jesus. When people hate the truth, even those who usually oppose one another can unite to oppose the work of God.

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They came up to Jesus and said, *"You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth."* What they said was in itself a right description of Jesus' character. Jesus indeed did not judge according to people's position and appearance, and He taught the Word of God truly.

But their praise did not come from hearts that believed and respected Jesus. It was flattery meant to loosen His guard with pleasant words and then trap Him. The same words can be a sincere confession or a hypocrisy that uses the other person, depending on the heart and the purpose with which they are spoken. God does not hear only the expression of the lips; He knows the heart and the purpose of the one who speaks.

They asked Jesus, *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"* At that time the Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire and had to pay taxes to Caesar. The tax went beyond a merely economic burden; it signified the fact that Israel was under the rule of a Gentile emperor, and so it was a sensitive question for many Jews.

If Jesus answered that they should pay the tax, they could brand Him as one who accepted Roman rule and make Him lose the people's support. If He answered that they should not pay, they could accuse Him as one who incited rebellion against the Roman government. The Pharisees prepared to put Jesus in difficulty before the crowd, and the Herodians could use His words as material for a political accusation.

Their question was not for learning the truth; whichever way He answered, it was for attacking Jesus. Jesus knew their hypocrisy and asked, *"Why do you test Me?"* A person can dress up his words and his expression and hide his intent, but before the Son of God even the motives of the heart are laid bare. If, even when questioning God, one has already fixed his

own conclusion and only looks for a fault to seize on in the Word, he cannot learn the truth.

Jesus told them to bring a denarius and show it to Him. The denarius was the coin used for paying taxes and trading goods under Roman rule at that time. Jesus asked whose image and inscription were on the coin, and they answered that they were Caesar's. They were carrying and using Roman money, already living their economic life within that system of rule.

Jesus said, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."* This means that God's people, too, while they live within the society of this earth, must carry out their just public responsibilities. Paying taxes, keeping law and order, and fulfilling one's responsibility for neighbors and community do not contradict faith. One must not use faith as a reason to avoid just duties or to cause harm to others.

But this word does not mean that one must obey the commands of the state and its rulers unconditionally. He said to return to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but He did not say to give to Caesar even the things that are God's. The authority of the state is a limited authority under God. If a ruler demands the worship that is to be given to God alone, or commands what goes against God's Word, the believer must obey God rather than men.

Nor does paying taxes mean acknowledging that everything a government does is right. The believer respects the legal order of society, yet discerns injustice and corruption and can demand what is right by just means. One must not reject the authority of the state as unconditionally evil, but neither must one absolutize the state and serve it like God.

After saying, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's,"* Jesus added the more important command: *"and to God the things that are God's."* The people had asked only

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whether they should pay taxes to Caesar, but Jesus asked whether they were giving to God what they ought to give Him. They saw Caesar's image engraved on the coin, but they did not consider in whose image they themselves had been made.

If they acknowledged the coin as Caesar's because his image and inscription were engraved on it, then man, made in the image of God, fundamentally belongs to God. Man's life, body, heart, talents, and time are all given by God. Therefore a person must not think he has fulfilled his responsibility by giving God only a portion of his money. He must acknowledge that his whole being is God's.

To give to God the things that are God's does not simply mean offering much money. The religious leaders managed the temple, the sacrifices, and the offerings, and yet they were opposing the Son of God. If one offers material things while holding on to his own authority and greed in his heart, he has not given himself to God. What God wants, before outward gifts, is the heart that believes in Jesus Christ, whom He sent, and obeys the Word.

But a sinner cannot make himself a clean and holy offering and present himself to God. Man was made in the image of God, but through sin he left God and has lived serving himself and the world as his masters. He has not returned to God what is God's but has used his life and talents for his own desires. This is the fundamental sin the creature has committed against the Creator.

Jesus Christ came to this earth to restore man, defiled by sin, to being God's possession again. With the baptism He received from John, He bore on His own body the sins of everyone in the world. The sinless Son of God, by receiving baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of humankind, took upon Himself all the sins of us who had failed to give back to God

the things that are God's.

Carrying those sins, Jesus was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving all the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried, rose again in three days, overcame sin and death, and completed eternal salvation. Whoever believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Therefore a person's coming to belong to God is not something achieved by the merit of offering much of his body and property. He must first believe the salvation Jesus completed and receive the remission of sin. God delivers the person who believes the gospel from sin and judgment and makes him His people and His child. A life given to God is not an act that pays the price of salvation but the fruit of faith that the person already saved without price shows with thanksgiving.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and has received the Holy Spirit now acknowledges that he is not the absolute master of his own life. He tries to use his occupation, wealth, time, and talents not only for his own desires but for God's will and the preaching of the gospel. This does not mean abandoning all of daily life and family responsibility. Fulfilling one's responsibilities at home and at work is also included in faithfully living the life God has entrusted.

The believer must not regard wealth as belonging only to Caesar's world or think of it as something unrelated to God. The world's image and values may be engraved on money, but the person who uses it belongs to God. He must earn honestly, pay the taxes that are due, care for his family, help people in

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hardship, and use it in serving the work of the gospel. Wealth is a tool of serving, not a master for man to depend on and worship.

Nor does this word mean dividing the state and faith into two completely unrelated realms. The believer lives everywhere as a person who belongs to God. Even in performing his civic duties he must follow honesty and love, and in holding political views he must not exalt any power or party above the gospel. Caesar is a limited ruler, but God is the Owner of all things, who rules even over Caesar.

The Pharisees and the Herodians heard Jesus' answer and marveled greatly at Him. Not only did they fail to trap Jesus; it was even exposed that they were not giving to God what they ought to give Him. But marveling at Jesus' wisdom and believing in Him as one's Savior are different. A person can admire the Word and still not return the lordship of his heart and his life to God.

This section teaches that the believer must understand rightly both his responsibility toward the world and his responsibility toward God. He should return to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and carry out the just duties of society, but he must not hand over to worldly power or wealth the heart and the worship that belong to God. Above all, he must believe the salvation of Jesus Christ, who restored him to being God's own.

Jesus made sinners clean with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and made them children who belong to God. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit does not exalt the state, wealth, or himself above God, and receives everything given to him as what God has entrusted. To carry out honest responsibility in the world, to exalt God most highly in the heart, and to live so that the gospel and the

righteousness of God are revealed through one's life—this is the life of faith that renders to God the things that are God's.

## The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, misunderstood both the Scriptures and the power of God because they applied the order of this world unchanged to the eternal kingdom

*"Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.'" (Mark 12:18–27).*

When the Pharisees and the Herodians failed to trap Jesus with the question of taxes, this time the Sadducees, who claim that there is no resurrection, came to Him. They did not come

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to learn the truth of the resurrection from Jesus sincerely; they prepared a question meant to make it look as though believing the resurrection creates an unsolvable contradiction. They tried to make the Word of God look ridiculous with human logic.

What they cited was the law by which, when a brother died without children, another brother took his wife and raised up offspring for the dead brother. This institution was meant to keep a family line from being cut off, to protect a woman left without husband or children, and to preserve the inheritance that had been given. The Sadducees used this law as a tool for attacking the resurrection.

They presented a situation in which seven brothers married one woman in turn, but none left offspring and all died, and finally the woman died as well. Then they asked whose wife among the seven she would be at the resurrection. Their logic stood on the premise that life after the resurrection also continues the same marriage relationships and family order as the present world.

If marriage relationships continued exactly as now even after the resurrection, complicated problems like their question could arise. The Sadducees tried to use that very contradiction to claim that the resurrection itself is impossible. But the contradiction they thought they had found lay not within the truth of the resurrection but within the wrong premise they themselves had set up.

Jesus said, *"Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"* The Sadducees quoted the writings of Moses and considered themselves to know the Scriptures well. But while using one institution of Scripture to fit their own claim, they did not know the will and the power of God, who gave that word. Quoting verses of Scripture and rightly knowing the truth that Scripture

teaches are not the same.

A person can read the Bible having already concluded that there is no resurrection. Then he accepts the verses that fit his own thinking and treats the words that do not fit as figures or errors. Conversely, when one places his experience and reason under the Word of God, he can accept even what he cannot understand now, trusting the power of the Creator. Faith is not abandoning reason; it is acknowledging that human reason is not greater than the power of God.

Because the Sadducees thought that everything ends when a person dies, they did not acknowledge the power of God, who raises the dead body. But God is the One who created the heavens and the earth out of nothing and formed man's body from the dust. For God, who made life at the first, to raise a dead person again is not impossible. To deny the resurrection is not merely to refuse one doctrine; it is to limit the power of God, the Owner of life.

Jesus said that when people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven. This does not mean that a resurrected person changes into an angel. Man is still a human being whom God has saved, a being different from the angels. It means that he is like the angels in that he enjoys a life that does not die again and no longer needs to continue the generations through marriage premised on death and childbirth.

Marriage is a precious institution God has given in this world. It is a gift given so that husband and wife may help and love each other, form a family, and bear descendants. But life after the resurrection goes beyond the present order, in which one generation goes and another follows because of death. The person who has obtained eternal life no longer needs to bear children and continue the family line to make up for death.

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This word does not mean that after the resurrection we will not recognize those we loved or that all memory of the relationships formed on this earth disappears. The Bible does not explain in detail what all relationships after the resurrection will look like. What is certain is that the life of the resurrection does not repeat the present order of marriage as it is, and that in God we come to enjoy a more perfect life and love than now.

When people think of the eternal kingdom, they easily imagine it by enlarging their present experience. One can understand the kingdom of God as merely a better house, more wealth, and endlessly continuing bodily pleasures. But the life of the resurrection is not the happiness of this world extended without limit. It is a wholly new order of life in which sin, death, and corruption have disappeared and one enjoys perfect communion with God.

To prove the resurrection of the dead, Jesus put forward the word about the burning bush in the book of Moses. God said to Moses, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* When Moses heard this word, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had already died physically long before.

Yet God did not speak of Himself as having been their God, as a relationship belonging only to the past; He revealed that He is still their God. The death of the body could not end the relationship of the covenant that God had made with them. God does not forget the promises He made to them, and in the end He will raise even their bodies so that they enjoy perfect life.

The word *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living"* does not mean that God has no authority or relation regarding those who have died. All people are under God's judgment, and the dead also will rise according to His command. This word especially emphasizes the fact that the person who believes God and is within His covenant is never

cast off before God even when his body dies.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had life not because they had not died physically. It was because they believed God's promise and were within the relationship of His covenant. God becomes the Father and the Savior of the person who believes, and even the death of the body cannot cut off that relationship. Therefore, for the believer, death is not the extinction of his being or an eternal end.

Man is born a descendant of Adam and is under spiritual death, separated from God because of sin. Even if his body lives and moves, if his sin has not been solved he cannot escape God's judgment and eternal death. Religious knowledge and good deeds can change a person's outside, but they cannot give eternal life to a dead soul. Life must be given by God, the Owner of life.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came in the flesh to bring to life those who are under sin and death. With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore on His own body the sins of everyone in the world. He who is without sin received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of humankind, and so took over all our sins—past, present, and future.

Carrying the sins He had so borne, Jesus was nailed to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving in our place the wages and the judgment of sin. But death could not keep holding Jesus, the Owner of life. Jesus was buried and rose again in three days in a body that does not decay, overcoming sin and death and showing that He is the Son of God and the perfect Savior.

Whoever believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy

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Spirit as a gift, and is born again. God becomes that person's Father and gives him eternal life. Even if his body dies, his relationship with God is not cut off, and at the time the Lord has appointed he will rise again in an incorruptible body.

Jesus' resurrection was not a mere revival, a return to the former body after death. He rose in a glorious body that is no longer under the rule of death. Jesus' resurrection becomes the guarantee that the person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit will also rise at the last. Salvation does not end with the soul being delivered from sin; it is completed in the resurrection of the body and the life of the eternal kingdom of God.

Therefore the hope of the resurrection does not make us take the present life lightly. Rather, it makes us know that the life of this earth does not all vanish with death but leads to an eternal outcome before God. The believer does not live only for the desires of the flesh and the profit of the world; looking to God, who will raise him again, he must give himself to preaching the gospel and practicing love.

To grieve in the face of the death of someone we love does not mean that we have no faith. Even a person who believes in Jesus can weep because of the pain of parting. But because he knows the fact that death is not an eternal end, he does not stay in hopeless despair. He receives comfort believing that Jesus rose from the dead and that he, too, will rise at the Lord's time.

The greatest problem of the Sadducees did not lie in their question being difficult. They fixed their conclusion first, that there is no resurrection, and shut the Word of God inside their own thinking. Jesus did not say that they were slightly mistaken; He said, "*You are therefore greatly mistaken.*" Without knowing the Scriptures and the power of God, one can greatly misunderstand the core of salvation and eternal life

even while leading a religious life.

This section teaches that God is the God of the living, who raises His people beyond the death of the body. The sinner must not judge the resurrection by his own experience and reason, but must believe the word that Jesus overcame sin and death with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person born again of the Spirit by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit has already obtained eternal life; even after the death of the body he is not cut off from God's hand, but will rise again and live with the Lord forever.

## Loving God and loving one's neighbor is the center of all the commandments, and that love appears as fruit in the life of the person saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit

*"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus*

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*saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him" (Mark 12:28–34).*

One of the scribes heard Jesus answering various questions rightly and asked which is the first of all the commandments. Among those who had come to Jesus earlier there were some who tried to catch Him in His words, but this scribe acknowledged that Jesus answered wisely and wanted to know the core of the commandments. It was important to know, more than memorizing countless provisions of the Law, what will of God runs through all those words.

Jesus first said, *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one."* Before the command to love God, it is proclaimed who God is. God is not one among many gods; He is the only Lord, the true God, who governs man's life and salvation. So the first commandment carries the meaning that man must not serve his own desires, or wealth, power, and fame, as if they were God, but must believe in and fear God alone as the Lord.

The word *"Hear, O Israel"* does not mean merely to hear the sound with one's ears. It is the demand to receive the Word of God as the truth and obey it, not placing it under one's own judgment. A person can know much of the Word and yet accept only the parts that agree with his own thinking. But the person who loves God exalts God's Word above his own thoughts, and even when the Word rebukes him, he acknowledges that it is right.

Jesus said, *"And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."* Love for God does not stay in religious feeling or in the confession of the lips. It means that a person's whole being—heart, life, thought, and ability—must be turned

toward God. If one says that he loves God while actually counting his own profit and the world's recognition more precious, he has not fully kept this commandment.

The second commandment is *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* Love toward God is not separated from one's attitude toward people. If one says that he loves God while hating his neighbor, deceiving him, and using him for his own profit, that confession does not agree with his life. To love one's neighbor does not stop at holding good feelings; it is counting another person's life and needs as one's own affair and doing actual good.

To love one's neighbor does not mean unconditionally granting whatever the other person wants or acknowledging wrong as right. True love does not comfort with lies; it seeks within the truth what is profitable for the other person's soul and life. At times one must point out a wrong clearly, and one may have to urge him to turn from danger or sin. Nor does this command mean that unjust violence and abuse are to be continually permitted. Love is seeking the true good of another person without abandoning truth and righteousness.

The commandment to love God and the commandment to love one's neighbor are not two teachings separated from each other. The person who truly loves God cannot treat carelessly the neighbor God has made, and to love his neighbor rightly he must first know the will of God, the source of love. The Ten Commandments can also be seen divided into commandments toward God and commandments toward man, and so Jesus revealed that these two loves are the center of all the commandments.

The scribe agreed with this word and answered that God is one and there is no other but He. He also said that to love God with all the heart, with all the understanding, and with all the

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strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices. He understood the fact that God wants not merely the outward act of offering many sacrifices but the heart that believes and loves Him and obeys His Word.

The whole burnt offerings and the other sacrifices were not wrong in themselves. They were the institution God gave to teach about sin and atonement, and they pointed to the sacrifice of the Christ who was to come. But if a person only repeats the ritual of sacrifice without fearing God, that sacrifice becomes an empty form. The fact of having offered many sacrifices cannot cover disobedience and hatred, and religious zeal cannot take the place of the sin of not loving God and one's neighbor.

Seeing that the scribe answered wisely, Jesus said, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God."* This was an assessment that he had understood the center of the commandments rightly and come near the truth. But Jesus did not declare that he had already entered the kingdom of God. To understand God's will with knowledge and acknowledge it as right, and to be born again by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit with the heart, are not the same.

This word does not mean that one can enter the kingdom of God by the merit of understanding the commandments well and practicing love. Rather, when one honestly applies these two commandments to himself, every person comes to discover that he has not kept them fully. Who can say that all his life long he has loved God alone with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, and all his strength? And who can be confident that he has always loved his neighbor exactly as his own body? The Law is not a tool for proving how good a person is; it makes him realize that he is a sinner before God.

What man lacks is not only knowledge of the commandments. In man there is the sinful nature that cannot do even what it knows to be right. Therefore God's commandments are not a ladder given to the sinner so that he may save himself; they serve to make him realize that he cannot be saved by his own righteousness and ability, and to make him seek Jesus Christ, the Savior. The scribe, too, had to go beyond knowing the center of the commandments and believe the Christ, who fulfilled those commandments.

Jesus alone is the One who loved the Father God perfectly and counted His neighbors more precious than His own body. Jesus loved sinners and gave up even His own life. That love was not a feeling that overlooks man's sin; it was the love of salvation that personally bore the sinner's sins and paid their price in order to deliver him from judgment.

With the baptism He received from John, Jesus bore on His own body the sins of everyone in the world. The sinless Son of God received the sins of sinners onto Himself by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of humankind; carrying those sins, He went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the punishment of sin in their place. And He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming sin and death and completing salvation.

The whole burnt offerings and the other sacrifices of the Old Testament were shadows showing in advance this perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The sacrifices of animals had to be repeated, but Jesus bore all sins at one time with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged once and for all on the Cross. Therefore the sinner has no need to put forward his good deeds or religious devotion as the price of salvation. Whoever believes with the heart the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood

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receives the remission of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again.

Believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not make the commandment of love unnecessary. Rather, when the sinner condemned under the Law receives the remission of sin through the gospel and receives the Holy Spirit, he at last knows the love of God and shares that love with others. Loving God and loving one's neighbor are not a price man pays to obtain salvation but the fruit of faith that appears in the person first saved by God's love.

Therefore, even if outward activities such as worship, offerings, service, and evangelism are many, if one does not love God and his neighbor, he must look back at himself. Religious acts must not become a means of displaying one's own righteousness or rising above others. The person who has received the remission of sin through the gospel remembers the mercy shown to him, embraces the weakness of his brother, helps neighbors in hardship, and above all preaches the true gospel that gives life to sinners.

The final word, *"But after that no one dared question Him,"* shows that before Jesus' wisdom and authority there was no longer anyone who could overthrow Him with disputes. Jesus not only interprets the commandments accurately; He is the Son of God, who Himself fulfills the righteousness and the love that the commandments demand. Man must not dispute with Jesus to establish his own righteousness, but must acknowledge his sin before His word and receive the grace of salvation.

This section teaches that we must not stop at knowledge of God's commandments but believe in Jesus Christ, to whom the commandments lead. The person who has acknowledged the sin of failing to love God fully and failing to love his neighbor

as his own body must not depend on his own resolutions and sacrifices, but must believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who has received the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit through this gospel serves God within His love, counts the souls of his neighbors precious, and comes to express in his life the love he has received.

## The Christ is the true man who came as David's descendant and the Son of God whom David confessed as *"Lord"*

*"Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."' Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:35–37).*

After answering the people's questions in the temple, Jesus this time asked about the teaching of the scribes. The scribes knew the fact that the Christ comes as the descendant of David. Since God had promised to raise up an eternal king from among David's descendants, their teaching itself was not wrong. The problem lay in the fact that they thought of the Christ only as a human king to be born of David's lineage.

*"Christ"* means the One anointed by God and sent by Him. In the time of the Old Testament, kings, priests, and prophets were established by being anointed. Jesus is the King who rules the kingdom of God, the eternal High Priest who offered His own body as the sacrifice of atonement, and the Prophet who

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revealed God's will and the truth of salvation. Therefore, if one understands the Christ merely as a king who would achieve Israel's political independence, he cannot fully know His identity and His ministry.

Jesus did not deny what the scribes knew. Seen according to the flesh, Jesus was indeed born on this earth following David's lineage. As God had promised David, He caused the Christ to come from among his descendants. But Jesus showed that the explanation that He is David's descendant alone cannot sufficiently reveal who the Christ is.

To explain this, Jesus quoted the word David recorded, moved by the Holy Spirit. In the word *"The LORD said to my Lord,"* the *"LORD"* who speaks first refers to God, and the One David called *"my Lord"* refers to the Christ who was to come. This word came not from David's personal guess or poetic imagination but as a prophecy given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Jesus acknowledged the authority of the Scriptures and with that word revealed His own true identity.

In general, an ancestor was regarded as being higher than his descendants. Yet David, the great king of Israel, called the Christ who would come as his own descendant *"my Lord."* This means that the Christ, though born after David in time, is originally higher than David. The Christ is the true man who came following David's lineage, and at the same time the Son of God whom David must serve as Lord.

Therefore Jesus' question was not a question denying the fact that the Christ is David's descendant. He made them think how David could call Him his Lord if the Christ were only David's descendant. The right answer is that the Christ is David's descendant and at the same time David's Lord. In Jesus, true humanity and true divinity are together.

Jesus is not One who lost the glory of God in saving sinners;

He is the One who, being the very form of God, put on the flesh of man and came to this earth. If Jesus were no more than an ordinary human being, He could not solve even His own sin and so could not bear the sins of all humankind. Conversely, if He had not come as a man, He could not have received baptism in the sinner's place or died on the Cross. Because Jesus is God and at the same time the true man without sin, He is the perfect Savior of all sinners.

The word *"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"* reveals the exaltation of the Christ and His final victory. To sit at the right hand of God does not simply mean occupying a spatial place; it means reigning as King in the authority and the glory of God. Even though people rejected Jesus and nailed Him to the Cross, God's plan of salvation does not fail. Jesus rose from the dead, ascended, and sat down at the right hand of God, and He is the eternal King, who will at last subdue all His enemies.

The enemies of the Christ include sin, death, and the power of Satan. A human king can mobilize armies and defeat visible enemies, but he cannot remove the sin in man's heart and the power of death. However much strength and wealth a sinner has, he cannot save himself from the judgment of sin. Therefore the Christ we need is not a king who guarantees only success in the world but the Savior, who delivers us forever from sin and death.

To save sinners, Jesus, the Son of God, bore all the sins of the world on His own body with the baptism He received from John. That the sinless Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of humankind, was not because He had committed the same sins as sinners; it was to take over all their sins in their place and fulfill the righteousness of God. By this, Jesus became the Lamb of God, who would carry away

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the sin of the world.

Carrying the sins He had borne, Jesus went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried and rose again in three days, showing that the price of sin had been paid completely and that the power of death had been defeated. Jesus, who afterward sat down at the right hand of God, is even now the eternal Lord and King of the saved, and at the appointed time He will come again and subdue all His enemies under His feet.

Therefore the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the death of the Cross, and the resurrection are one work of salvation that the Christ, David's Lord, accomplished to save sinners. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes a child of God. It is not man's effort or religious merit that removes sin; the righteousness that Jesus Christ, who is God, accomplished in person by coming in the flesh saves the one who believes.

If we think of Jesus only as David's descendant, we lower Him to a great figure of the past or a great religious leader. Respecting Jesus' moral teaching or acknowledging the miracles He performed is not enough. One must believe that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh, the Lord who bore and removed all his sins. Just as David called the Christ *"my Lord,"* the person who believes the gospel must also receive Jesus as his own Lord and Savior.

The fact that David, moved by the Holy Spirit, confessed the Christ as Lord shows that what the Holy Spirit does is always to exalt Jesus Christ and testify to His salvation. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to exalt man or to lead people only into emotional experiences. The Holy Spirit makes people

realize and believe who Jesus is and what salvation He accomplished with the water and the blood, and He dwells in the heart of the person who has received the remission of sin, leading him to serve Christ as Lord.

The people in the passage heard Jesus' teaching gladly. They heard with joy as Jesus made clear from the Scriptures the identity of the Christ, which the scribes had failed to explain clearly. But merely hearing the Word gladly does not complete salvation. One must receive the word he has heard so that it corrects his own thoughts and expectations, and believe with his heart the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Today, too, people can limit Jesus to the image they want. Some think of Jesus only as One who solves their difficulties, and some understand Him only as a teacher who taught good deeds or a figure who reformed society. But Jesus is not One who exists to fit the expectations people have made. He is the Son of God, who exists before all things, and the Christ, who came as David's descendant to save sinners.

This section teaches that rightly knowing the identity of Jesus Christ is the starting point of understanding the gospel. Jesus is the true man who came through David's lineage and at the same time the Son of God whom David called *"Lord."* With the baptism He received from John He bore all our sins, with the Cross and the resurrection He overcame sin and death, and at the right hand of God He reigns as the eternal King. The person who believes this Jesus as his own Lord and Savior is saved from all his sins and, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, lives looking toward the eternal kingdom of God.

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## Hypocrisy that seeks people's recognition and uses the weak goes against the true righteousness and serving that the gospel gives

*"Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'" (Mark 12:38–40).*

After teaching in the temple the fact that the Christ is David's descendant and at the same time David's Lord, Jesus warned the people to beware of the scribes. The scribes were the religious leaders who studied the Scriptures, interpreted the Law, and taught it to the people. They had the responsibility to deliver the Word of God rightly and help the people serve God. But some scribes did not use that position and knowledge for serving God and their neighbors; they made them means of exalting themselves and using the weak.

Jesus did not condemn all scribes because of their office. Immediately before, when one scribe answered wisely about the center of the commandments, He said to him, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God."* The problem was not the name or the office of scribe itself but the heart that used the office to seek people's recognition and material gain. So the word *"Beware of the scribes"* is a warning that one must not unconditionally trust a person's teaching and life on the basis of his title and outward appearance.

The long robes the scribes wore were robes that revealed their status. The act of wearing a long robe is not in itself a sin. What Jesus pointed out was the heart that wanted to go around in long robes, display religious position, and receive people's

respect. The office of serving God had become not a place for revealing God but an ornament to make oneself look like a special person.

They also wanted to be greeted in the marketplaces. The marketplace was a public place where many people came and went, so receiving respect there could display one's fame and authority. To greet another person with courtesy or to give due respect to a leader is not wrong. But if a servant of God demands people's greetings as his natural right and discriminates between those who exalt him and those who do not, he is seeking the glory of man rather than of God.

The scribes also wanted the best seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts. Those seats represented high position and honor within the community. They considered that because they knew much of God's Word they should receive treatment higher than others. But the more one knows the Word, the more he should humble himself before that Word and serve others rather than exalt himself. If spiritual knowledge and office become the ground of pride, that person is going against, with his life, the meaning of the very Word he teaches.

The more serious problem was that they were people who devour the possessions of widows. At that time a widow was a weak person, hard to protect economically and socially. The scribes, as those who knew the Law, ought to have protected such people and treated them justly. Instead, they used their knowledge and authority to take away the property of widows. The passage does not explain by what concrete methods they devoured their possessions, but it is clear that they used religious trust and authority to bring loss on people who ought to have been protected.

Their sin was heavier than simple greed. They put forward

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the name of God while harming the weak, whom God had told them to care for. Outwardly they looked like holy leaders, but in reality they filled their own desires. Suppressing people's consciences with religious authority, demanding excessive devotion and wealth under the pretext of God's blessing, and using the weakness of a person seeking help for one's own benefit are all grave sins, and this warning against them must be taken seriously.

They made long prayers in hypocrisy to hide their greed. Jesus did not condemn praying long in itself. To pray earnestly and long before God is a precious thing. The problem was prayer meant not for giving the heart to God but for looking godly to people. Their lips were calling on God, but their hearts were directed toward people's praise and their own profit.

Hypocrisy is the state in which the appearance shown outwardly and the actual state of the heart differ from each other. People can see long prayers, beautiful words, Bible knowledge, and service, and judge a person to be godly. But God sees not only the length and the scale of the act but also the motive of the heart and the hidden conduct. If one looks like a person of good faith before people while using the weak where no one sees, his religious acts do not cover that sin but reveal his hypocrisy all the more clearly.

Jesus said that such people "*will receive greater condemnation.*" All sin is under God's judgment, but the sin of using the authority of God's Word to deceive and harm others while knowing that Word carries a heavier responsibility, for it can lead astray even the people who trusted their teaching. A high position and much knowledge are not privileges to boast of before God but responsibilities to be carried out all the more faithfully.

The appearance of the scribes shows into what hypocrisy a

person can fall when he tries to establish his own righteousness with religious acts. Hiding the sin within himself while putting forward long prayers, office, service, and devotion, he comes to think himself more righteous than others. But though one may dress up greed and pride in religious form, he cannot remove sin before God. A person must receive God's salvation, which washes away all his sins, and not merely mend his outward appearance.

Jesus walked a completely different path from the scribes, who exalted themselves. Though He is the Son of God, He came not to be served by people but to serve sinners and to give His life as a ransom. Jesus did not turn away from the poor, the sick, and those despised as sinners, and without demanding any price He gave the word of life and the grace of salvation. True spiritual authority lies not in lording it over people but in giving life to souls according to God's will.

With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore on His own body the sins of everyone in the world, including the hypocrisy and the greed of the scribes. The sinless Son of God took over all the sins of sinners, and carrying those sins He went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment in their place. And He was buried and rose again in three days, overcoming the power of sin and death and accomplishing perfect salvation.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, not by his own religious merits but by the righteousness Jesus Christ accomplished. Because the Holy Spirit comes upon the heart of the person who has received the remission of sin, he no longer needs to dress up a righteous appearance to win people's praise. When he falls short, he looks at himself honestly within the gospel, and he learns the life that seeks God's will and the

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good of other souls before his own honor.

The faith of having been saved through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection does not end at criticizing the wrongs of religious leaders. Every person must examine the fact that in himself, too, there are the heart that wants to be recognized and the desire to rise above others. He must look back before the Word to see whether, while claiming outwardly to serve God, he is actually pursuing his own honor and profit, and whether he is using or ignoring the circumstances of weak people.

Especially the person who preaches the gospel or serves the church must not lord it over the saints with his position. He must use finances and authority honestly, care for those who are economically hard-pressed or socially unprotected, and lead people not so as to bind them to himself but to Jesus Christ. Rather than demanding respect, he must serve first, and more than the words he shows before people, he must make right his conduct where it is not seen.

Conversely, this word must not be used as a ground for suspecting all ministers and leaders or despising the office itself. Jesus' word does not teach unconditional distrust; it teaches discerning teaching and fruit by the standard of the Word of God. Do not judge a person only by appearance, eloquence, title, and popularity; examine whether he preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit rightly and whether he serves souls more than his own profit.

This section teaches what true godliness is before God. To be exalted by people and boast of religious form while harming the weak is not serving God. True godliness begins from acknowledging one's sin and believing the salvation Jesus accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who has received the remission of sin and the Holy

Spirit through this gospel does not dress himself up to win people's praise; he cares for his neighbors in a low place, uses the office and the wealth entrusted to him honestly, and serves souls with the love of Jesus Christ.

## Jesus looked not at the amount of the offering but at the heart that believed God and entrusted itself wholly to Him

*"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.'" (Mark 12:41–44).*

Jesus sat facing the treasury of the temple and watched the people putting money into it. What Jesus saw was not limited to how much each person put in. To people's eyes the visible amount appears first, but Jesus knew each person's circumstances and the heart with which he gave. The act of giving to God takes place not before other people's evaluation but before God, who knows all things.

Many rich people put much money into the treasury. The passage does not say that the fact of the rich giving much is itself wrong. To give much with thanksgiving from the wealth God has entrusted and to use it for good work is a precious thing. What Jesus compared was not the mere size of the amounts but the relation between what each person had and

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what he gave. The rich put in much money, yet they still had enough left for their living.

Then one poor widow came and put in two mites. The mite was a coin of very small value in use at that time, and two mites made one quadrans. To the eyes of the people around her, it would have been an amount that hardly caught the eye. Compared with the sound of much money going into the treasury, the two coins the widow gave could look like nothing at all.

But Jesus called His disciples separately and said that this widow had put in more than all those who had put into the treasury. Counting only the amount, the widow's two mites were less than the money the rich gave. But Jesus saw each person's whole circumstances and how much of what he had he gave. The rich put in a part out of their abundance, but the widow, out of her poverty, gave all that she had.

Jesus' judgment differed from the world's calculation. The world easily evaluates a person by the size of results and the numbers that appear outwardly. But God looks not at how much a person has but at the heart with which that person comes to God. One can give much and yet seek self-display and people's recognition, and one can give little and yet carry true faith and thanksgiving toward God.

The two mites the widow gave were not money that could be spent without affecting her living. Jesus said that it was all she had, her whole livelihood. This widow's act shows a person who acknowledged God as the Owner of her life and entrusted even her future to Him. What she gave was two small coins, but in those coins her whole living was contained.

This word also connects with Jesus' earlier rebuke of the scribes, who devour the possessions of widows. The leaders who were to teach God ought to have protected the weak, like

widows, but instead they used their property. The poor widow, on the other hand, in a place where she received no honor, gave her most precious thing to God. The hypocrisy of the scribes, honored by people, and the true heart of the widow, noticed by no one, stand in sharp contrast.

Therefore this passage must not be used as a ground for forcing poor people to give even their living expenses. Jesus did not tell the leaders to take away the widow's property; rather, He warned that those who devour the possessions of widows will receive greater condemnation. The faith the widow offered willingly is precious, but using religious authority to give poor people fear or guilt and demand their wealth goes against the meaning of this passage.

Nor can we make it an identical rule that because the widow gave all she had, every believer must always give his whole livelihood as an offering. The Bible also teaches as important that a person care for his family and carry the responsibilities needed for living. Giving to God is not a matter of compulsion or competition; it is to be decided in faith and thanksgiving, according to the grace and the circumstances each person has received. What matters is not imitating the amount but learning the widow's true heart toward God.

An offering is not a religious record meant to be shown to people. One must not consider himself a person of better faith because he gave a large amount, or despise the person who gave little. Conversely, one need not be ashamed of a small amount or think that God will not receive it. God does not evaluate faith by comparing people's economic abilities with one another, and He gladly receives what is given with thanksgiving and willingness from the heart that believes the gospel.

But the widow's devotion must not be understood as a

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merit for obtaining the remission of sin either. Giving all one's property does not wash away a person's sins or create the qualification to enter the kingdom of God. Even if one offers not only his wealth but his body and his life, a sinner cannot fully pay the price of his sin by himself. Salvation depends not on how much man has given to God but on what God has given for the sinner.

To save sinners, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. With the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus bore on His own body the sins of everyone in the world. The sinless Son of God took over all our sins by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of humankind, and carrying those sins He went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, receiving the judgment of sin in our place.

On the Cross Jesus gave up His life without reserve, and He was buried and rose again in three days. If the widow gave her whole livelihood, Jesus gave His body and His life wholly to bring sinners to life. His sacrifice was not simply a moving example; it was the perfect atonement that actually paid the price of all the sins of the world. It is not that man first gave something great to God and so obtained salvation; God first gave His Son and opened the way of salvation.

Whoever believes with his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, made up of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, regardless of his works or the amount of his offerings. And he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again as a child of God. Offerings, service, and sacrifice are not conditions for obtaining the remission of sin or a price paid to maintain salvation; they are the fruit of faith that the person already saved without price bears in thanksgiving for God's grace.

The person who has received the remission of sin through the gospel comes to know that his wealth, too, was originally entrusted to him by God. So he turns from piling up wealth only for himself and gladly uses it for preaching the gospel and helping neighbors in hardship. The Holy Spirit gives not the heart of one who is robbed by force but the heart that remembers the grace received from God and shares willingly. He makes us thank God, who gave the wealth, rather than boast of what we have given.

The widow's two mites also teach that the worth of what is given to God must not be judged by numbers alone. What looks like a small labor to one person may be a great sacrifice to another. God knows the prayers and the service that are not displayed to people, the small material gifts and the quiet serving. Do not become proud or discouraged by comparing results with others; be faithful within the range entrusted to you.

Those who serve the church and the gospel must also not treat people differently according to the amount they have given. If special authority and honor are given to the one who gave much, and the one who gave little is counted unimportant, they are walking the road opposite to Jesus' judgment. An offering is not money that buys influence, and the church must count precious and protect the faith and the circumstances of the poor as well as the rich. The finances entrusted to it must also be managed honestly and transparently.

To follow the widow's faith does not lie in irresponsibly disposing of all one's property. It is looking back at whether we depend on wealth more than on God, whether we make a show with only what is left over, and whether we gladly share what God has given for the gospel and for our neighbors. God looks not at the abundance or lack of material things but at whom the heart is depending on.

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This section shows the fact that even devotion that looks small in people's eyes is counted precious by God when it is offered in faith. At the same time it teaches that such devotion must not be turned into a merit of salvation or a compulsory rule. The person who believes the love of Jesus, who gave Himself wholly with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and so has received the remission of sin and the Holy Spirit, offers his time, strength, and wealth with thanksgiving and faith—not with a heart that seeks people's recognition—and serves the gospel and his neighbors. ✉

# Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 12

## [Question] 1. What do Jesus' teachings contained in Mark chapter 12 tell us?

Mark chapter 12 exposes the unbelief and the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who rejected the Son of God, while teaching what the true faith and service that please God are. Jesus spoke in turn of the parable of the wicked vinedressers, the question of paying taxes to Caesar, the resurrection of the dead, the greatest commandment, the identity of the Christ, the hypocrisy of the scribes, and the offering of the poor widow. All these teachings show, by contrast, the religion that serves God only outwardly and the true faith that believes and loves God with the heart.

First, Jesus spoke the parable of the wicked vinedressers of the vineyard. The owner of the vineyard refers to God; the vineyard, to the nation and the ministry God entrusted; and the vinedressers, to the religious leaders who regarded God's people and the work entrusted to them as their own possession. The servants the owner sent represent the prophets who delivered God's will, and the vinedressers' killing even the beloved son sent last shows that the Jewish leaders would reject and kill Jesus, the Son of God. God judges the wicked vinedressers and entrusts the vineyard to others. This means that the kingdom of God is entrusted not to people who merely hold religious position but to people who bear the fruit of the gospel according to the owner's will.

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Jesus, the son rejected by the vinedressers, is *"the stone which the builders rejected,"* but He is *"the chief cornerstone"* that God has established. Jesus bore all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, completing salvation. Though rejected by people, Jesus Christ alone is the only way to receive the remission of sin and enter the kingdom of God. Therefore a faith that claims to serve God while rejecting Jesus is nothing more than fruitless religion.

When the Pharisees and the Herodians tried to catch Jesus with the question of paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus taught, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."* This means acknowledging the just order and responsibilities of the world while not forgetting that man is ultimately God's possession. Just as the coin was counted as Caesar's because his image was engraved on it, man, made in the image of God, must return his heart and his life to God.

To the Sadducees, who did not believe the resurrection, He said in rebuke that they were mistaken because they *"do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God."* Life after the resurrection is not a life in which the marriage relationships of this world are repeated as they are; the resurrected live in a new state, like the angels in heaven. God's saying that He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob testifies that God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. Therefore the hope of the believer does not end with the life of this earth; it lies in the power of God, who raises the dead, and in eternal life.

To the scribe's question which is the first of all the commandments, He answered to love God with all the heart,

with all the soul, with all the mind, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as one's own body. Loving God and loving one's neighbor is more precious than all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices. This means that the center of the Law is not performing many ceremonies and sacrifices but truly loving God and treating one's neighbor with that love. But it is not that man obtains salvation by practicing this love perfectly with his own strength. He must first believe the love and the salvation of Jesus, who gave everything for him, and receive the remission of sin, and after receiving that grace he must live the life of loving God and his neighbor.

Jesus taught that the Christ is not merely David's descendant. The Christ came in the flesh as David's descendant, but He is the Son of God and the Lord, higher than David—so much so that David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called Him *"my Lord."* This word shows that we must not understand Jesus only as one great teacher or a political king, but must believe Him as the Savior sent by God and the Lord of all things.

Next, Jesus said to beware of the scribes, who go around in long robes and receive greetings from people in the marketplaces, and who desire *"the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts."* While praying at length outwardly, they devoured the possessions of widows. Jesus warned that the hypocritical faith that tries to look godly before people while using weak people receives an even heavier judgment.

Finally, Jesus contrasted the large offerings of the rich with the poor widow's two mites. The rich put in a part out of their abundance, but the widow, in her poverty, gave all she had, her whole livelihood. Jesus looked not at the amount of the offering but at the faith that believed and depended on God and gave with a glad heart. This means that true devotion is judged

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not by the amount visible to others, but by how deeply one believed in and loved God when giving.

Therefore Mark chapter 12 teaches that we must throw away the faith that rejects the Son of God while holding only religious authority and outward form, and must believe Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Its central lesson is also that we must believe the resurrection, love God most of all, love our neighbor, and give our lives to God not with hypocrisy but with a true heart and faith.

## [Question] 2. Mark 12:1—in what manner did Jesus deliver the word to the people?

Jesus spoke to the people in parables. Through the story of an owner who made a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country, He explained what had happened between God and the people of Israel, between the religious leaders and the prophets, and with Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus used the story of a vineyard and vinedressers, which people could easily understand, but in it were contained the sin of the religious leaders, who had defied the Word of God and rejected even His Son, and the judgment that would come upon them. The leaders also understood that this parable had been spoken pointing at them.

## [Question] 3. Mark 12:1–12—what lessons does the parable of the wicked vinedressers give us?

The parable of the wicked vinedressers exposes the sin of the religious leaders, who regarded what God had entrusted as

their own possession and defied God's will, and teaches the fact that judgment surely comes on those who reject the Son of God. At the same time it gives the lesson that the kingdom of God is entrusted to people who bear the fruit of the gospel according to the owner's will.

In the parable, the owner who made the vineyard and leased it to the vinedressers refers to God. That the owner set a hedge around it and prepared a place for the wine vat and a tower means that he prepared everything needed for the vineyard to bear fruit. The vineyard primarily refers to the covenant God entrusted to the people of Israel and the ministry of the kingdom of God, and the vinedressers represent the Jewish religious leaders, who were to take rightful charge of it and serve. Since the owner of the vineyard is God, not the vinedressers, they were to care for the vineyard according to the owner's will and offer him its produce when the time came.

But the vinedressers beat, insulted, and killed the servants the owner sent. These servants refer to the prophets sent to deliver repentance and God's will to the people of Israel. The religious leaders and the stubborn people did not accept the Word of God and persecuted the prophets who rebuked their sins. They were stewards entrusted with the Word of God, yet they tried to seize God's rights as if the vineyard were their own.

The *"beloved son"* whom the owner sent last refers to Jesus Christ. The vinedressers, though they knew the son was the heir, killed him to take the inheritance and cast him out of the vineyard. This word shows that the Jewish leaders, though seeing the evidence of who Jesus is, would reject and kill Him to keep their own authority. But even their rejection could not destroy God's plan of salvation. Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John and, like the son cast out of the vineyard, was nailed to the Cross outside

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the city of Jerusalem and received the judgment of sin; and by rising from the dead He completed the work of salvation that removes all the sins of humankind.

The owner of the vineyard said that he would destroy the wicked vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. This means that the person who enjoys only religious position while rejecting God's Son and His Word receives judgment in the end, and that the work of the kingdom of God is entrusted to people who obey the owner's will and bear fruit. The fruit here does not mean simply religious acts or achievements shown to people. It means the fruit of faith: believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and receiving the remission of sin, preaching that gospel to others so that souls receive salvation, and living according to God's will.

Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders, but He became *"the chief cornerstone."* As the cornerstone becomes the standard and the foundation of the whole building when a building is raised, Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the remission of sin, the kingdom of God, and the church. Therefore the faith that tries to build up only the outward form of religion and human righteousness while throwing away Jesus and the gospel He accomplished cannot be acknowledged before God.

This parable warns believers today as well not to regard the gospel, the church, and the offices God has entrusted as their own possession. The church and the ministry of the gospel are not for personal honor or material profit; they are for preaching the gospel according to the owner's will and offering God the fruit of souls being saved. We must remember that the Owner of the vineyard is God, believe in Jesus, the Son of God, and live as faithful vinedressers who bear the fruit of the gospel in the place entrusted to us.

## [Question] 4. Mark 12:1—who is the central figure in the parable of verse 1 that Jesus spoke?

The central figure in the parable of verse 1 is the man who made the vineyard, that is, the owner of the vineyard. He made the vineyard, set a hedge around it, prepared a place for the wine vat and a tower, then leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

This owner of the vineyard spiritually refers to God. Since God prepared the vineyard and entrusted it to the vinedressers, the true owner of the vineyard is God, not the vinedressers. The vinedressers, therefore, were stewards who were to manage the vineyard according to the owner's will and offer him its produce when the time came.

## [Question] 5. What was the structure of the vineyard described in Mark 12:1?

The owner of the vineyard first made the vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place where the juice of the grapes could be pressed, and built a tower from which the vineyard could be watched. Then he leased the completed vineyard to vinedressers and went into a far country.

The hedge protected the vineyard from outside intrusion and from beasts; the vat place was for pressing juice from the harvested grapes; and the tower was a facility for watching over and guarding the vineyard. This shows that the owner fully prepared the environment and the facilities needed for the vines to grow and bear fruit before entrusting them to the vinedressers.

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## [Question] 6. According to Mark 12:2, whom did the owner of the vineyard send to the vinedressers when harvest time came?

When harvest time came, the owner of the vineyard sent one of his servants to the vinedressers. The purpose of sending that servant was to receive from the vinedressers some of the fruit of the vineyard.

In the parable, the servant the owner sent refers to a prophet sent to deliver God's Word and His will to the people of Israel.

## [Question] 7. Mark 12:3—how did the vinedressers act toward the servant the owner of the vineyard sent?

The vinedressers seized the servant the owner of the vineyard had sent, beat him severely, and then sent him back empty-handed without giving him anything.

This shows that the vinedressers ignored the owner's ownership and his demand and rebelled against him. Spiritually it represents how the people of Israel and their religious leaders rejected and persecuted the prophets, who had been sent to deliver the Word of God.

## [Question] 8. Mark 12:4–5—what opportunities did the owner of the vineyard keep giving the rebellious vinedressers?

Though the first servant he sent came back severely beaten and empty-handed, the owner of the vineyard did not judge the

vinedressers immediately. He sent another servant again, and even after that servant was wounded in the head and insulted, he kept sending yet another servant and many more.

The vinedressers not only beat and insulted the servants the owner sent but even killed some of them. That the owner nevertheless kept sending servants means that he repeatedly gave the vinedressers the opportunity to turn from their wrong, acknowledge the owner's rights, and offer the due produce.

This shows the longsuffering of God, who did not destroy His rebellious people at once but sent many prophets, speaking continually and giving them the opportunity to repent. But if one counts God's longsuffering as His overlooking of sin and defies the Word to the end, he finally receives the judgment that cannot be escaped.

## [Question] 9. Mark 12:6—what does the owner of the vineyard sending his beloved son last show?

That the owner of the vineyard, even after several servants had been rejected and persecuted, sent his beloved son last shows the owner's longsuffering toward the vinedressers and his heart to give them opportunity until the end. Thinking, *"They will respect my son,"* the owner sent his one beloved son, distinguished from the servants.

In the parable, the servants sent first refer to the prophets God sent to the people of Israel, and the beloved son sent last refers to God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. After speaking repeatedly through the prophets, God at last sent His own Son to this earth. This shows that Jesus is not one among many prophets but the beloved Son whom God sent, the One who fully reveals God's will and His salvation.

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The purpose for which God sent His Son was not to judge the world at once but to save people fallen in sin. Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, completing the work of salvation. In the fact that God sent the Son He loves most, God's great love, which would save people from sin, is revealed.

But the vinedressers, though they knew the beloved son was the heir, did not respect him. In the same way the religious leaders of Judea, though seeing the words and the works that showed Jesus to be the Son of God, rejected Him to protect their authority and their profit. This shows that man's sin lies not only in the ignorance of not knowing God, but in the stubbornness and the stubbornness and rebellion of refusing to acknowledge God's authority and wanting to be one's own master.

The word *"They will respect my son"* does not mean that God did not know what would happen. God knew that they would reject even His Son, but through this parable He revealed the fact that He had given them abundant opportunity and love and that their judgment is just. Therefore man must not reject the Son God sent, but must receive Jesus and the gospel of salvation He accomplished by faith.

## [Question] 10. Mark 12:7–8—what did the rebellious vinedressers do when the owner's son came?

The rebellious vinedressers saw the owner's son and recognized that he was the heir. But they did not respect him; they discussed among themselves, saying, *"This is the heir.*

*Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours."* And they seized the owner's son, killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.

They killed the owner's son not because they did not know him, but out of the greed and the rebellion that wanted to make the vineyard completely their own. This points to the Jewish religious leaders rejecting Jesus, the Son of God, and handing Him over to death. They claimed to serve God, but in reality they loved their position and their profit more than God's authority.

## [Question] 11. Mark 12:9—what was the owner of the vineyard's disposition of the wicked vinedressers?

The owner of the vineyard said that he would come to the wicked vinedressers, who had persecuted his servants and killed even his beloved son, destroy them, and give the vineyard to others.

This means that judgment comes on the religious leaders who rejected God's Word and His Son to the end, and that the ministry of the kingdom of God will be entrusted to people who obey God's will and bear the fruit of the gospel. God's longsuffering has an end, and the one who keeps refusing His grace and opportunity finally receives His just judgment.

## [Question] 12. Explain the meaning of the Old Testament word from the Psalms quoted in Mark 12:10–11.

Mark 12:10–11 quotes the word of Psalm 118:22–23: *"The*

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*stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes."* Through this word Jesus explained who the owner's son killed by the wicked vinedressers really is, and what result rejecting him would bring.

*"The builders"* refers to the Jewish religious leaders—the chief priests, the scribes, the elders, and others—who had been entrusted with God's Word and His people. They were the ones who should have recognized and received the Messiah God sent, but instead, to guard their religious authority and profit, they threw Jesus away like a useless stone. As the wicked vinedressers killed the owner's son, the religious leaders rejected Jesus, the Son of God, and handed Him over to death.

But God made that stone, which people had thrown away, *"the chief cornerstone."* The chief cornerstone is the important stone that sets the direction and the standard of the whole building and connects and supports the different walls. This means that Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the remission of sin, the kingdom of God, and the church. The person who has become God's enemy through sin cannot come to God by his own righteousness and religious acts; only through Jesus is he reconciled to God and does he become God's people.

Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead. People thought they had completely removed Jesus by nailing Him to the Cross, but God raised Him from the dead and established Him as the Savior of all who believe and as the cornerstone of the kingdom of God. Therefore Jesus' death was not an event in which God's plan failed; it was the event in which God's will to save sinners was accomplished.

The word *"This was the LORD's doing, And it is marvelous*

*in our eyes"* means that God accomplished His marvelous work of salvation through Jesus, whom people rejected. By man's judgment, Jesus, rejected and killed, seemed to have been defeated; but God removed all sins through His death and resurrection and gave eternal life to those who believe. Thus even the evil deeds of men could not destroy God's plan of salvation.

Therefore this word teaches that man must not judge Jesus by his own thoughts and religious standards and throw Him away, but must believe Him as the cornerstone of salvation that God has established. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus completed is built on that cornerstone and forms the house of God, but the person who rejects Jesus and tries to establish his own righteousness cannot escape God's judgment in the end.

## [Question] 13. Mark 12:12—what was the reaction of the Jewish leaders, who knew the parable of the vineyard pointed at them?

The Jewish leaders perceived that Jesus had spoken the parable of the wicked vinedressers pointing at them. But they did not acknowledge their sins and turn back; instead, they tried to seize Jesus.

Only, because they feared the multitude listening to Jesus' words, they could not arrest Him on the spot, and they left Him and went away. This shows that rather than fearing God and repenting before the Word, they were more conscious of their position and the people's reaction, and that even when their sin was exposed, they hardened their hearts all the more.

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## [Question] 14. Mark 12:13—who were the people sent to catch Jesus in His words?

The Jewish leaders sent some of the Pharisees and the Herodians to catch Jesus in His words.

The Pharisees were a religious group that strictly kept the Law and the tradition of the elders, and the Herodians were a political group that supported the house of Herod and the political order of Rome. Two groups usually different in inclination acted together under the aim of trapping Jesus.

## [Question] 15. Mark 12:13—what does it show that the Pharisees and the Herodians, who stood in different positions, came to Jesus together?

The Pharisees were a religious group that valued the Law and the traditions of Judaism and did not welcome Roman rule, whereas the Herodians were a political group that supported the house of Herod and the political order of Rome. Ordinarily their positions and interests differed, and they were people who could hardly come near one another.

That these two groups came to Jesus together shows that they united in the aim of opposing and removing Jesus. The Pharisees thought that Jesus' teaching exposed their religious authority and hypocrisy, and the Herodians regarded Jesus as a figure who could become a threat to the existing political order. They came not to know the truth but to find something to seize on in Jesus' words and accuse Him religiously or politically.

This shows that when man's sin is exposed before the truth, even forces that oppose each other can join strength in the work of opposing the Son of God. It also gives the warning that however

much one may outwardly seem to be for God and for the nation, if the heart that would protect its own position and profit comes first, he can stand on the side that goes against the truth.

## [Question] 16. Mark 12:14—what did the Pharisees and the Herodians say to Jesus in flattery?

They said to Jesus, *"Teacher, we know that You are true, and care about no one; for You do not regard the person of men, but teach the way of God in truth."*

After exalting Jesus, saying that He is true, that He does not look at people's status or watch their faces, and that He teaches the way of God truly, they asked whether it is right to pay taxes to Caesar. What they said was in itself right concerning Jesus, but it was not believed and confessed with the heart; it was flattery meant to trap Jesus.

## [Question] 17. What was the question of the Pharisees and the Herodians recorded in Mark 12:14–15?

The Pharisees and the Herodians asked Jesus, *"Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Shall we pay, or shall we not pay?"*

They demanded that He answer whether paying taxes to the Roman emperor Caesar agrees with God's will and whether they should actually pay the tax. This was not a question for learning the truth but a trap meant to use Jesus' answer to accuse Him religiously or politically.

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## [Question] 18. Mark 12:15—what did Jesus tell them to bring in order to answer the question of the Pharisees and the Herodians about the tax?

Jesus told them to bring a denarius and show it to Him.

The denarius was a silver coin in circulation in the Roman Empire at that time, the money used when paying taxes to Caesar. Jesus intended to answer their question through the image and the inscription engraved on that coin.

## [Question] 19. What kind of money was the denarius in Jesus' day?

The denarius was a silver coin widely used in the Roman Empire in Jesus' day. It was the amount corresponding to the wage an ordinary laborer received for one day's work. Matthew chapter 20 also records that the owner of a vineyard agreed with the laborers on one denarius a day. However, since the times and living conditions differ, it is difficult to convert this exactly into a specific amount of today's money.

On the denarius brought to Jesus in Mark chapter 12, the image and the inscription of Caesar were engraved. Since the Roman emperor during Jesus' public ministry was Tiberius, this coin is generally taken to have been a silver coin bearing the image and the inscription of the emperor Tiberius. In fact, silver denarii issued during Tiberius' reign, from AD 14 to 37, still remain. However, since the text of Mark itself does not directly state the name of the emperor engraved on the coin, the explanation that it was a denarius of Tiberius is a well-founded conclusion based on the historical background of the time.

The denarius, therefore, was not simply money; it was a

coin displaying the image and the authority of the Roman emperor. Jesus used exactly this feature to give the teaching *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

## [Question] 20. Mark 12:16–17—after confirming Caesar's image and inscription on the denarius, what did Jesus say?

Showing them the denarius, Jesus asked, *"Whose image and inscription is this?"* When the people answered, *"Caesar's,"* Jesus said, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*

This means that we should carry out the just duties of the earthly nation, but that man's heart and life ultimately belong to God and must be duly returned to Him. The people who heard this answer marveled greatly at Jesus' wisdom.

## [Question] 21. What kind of religious group were the Sadducees in Jesus' day?

The Sadducees were a religious and political group that existed within Judaism in Jesus' day, made up mainly of the high priestly families, the wealthy priestly class, and aristocrats. They were deeply involved in the sacrifices and the administration of the temple in Jerusalem and exercised great influence in the Sanhedrin, the highest council of the Jews. The fact that the high priestly class of that day was closely connected with the party of the Sadducees appears also in Acts 5:17.

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They counted the written Law, especially the Law of Moses, as important, but they opposed the oral traditions and interpretations the Pharisees accepted. They also did not acknowledge the resurrection, angels, or the existence of spirits. Acts 23:8 records the difference clearly: *"For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both."*

Since the Sadducees already enjoyed considerable power and wealth centered on the temple and the priestly system, they showed a pragmatic inclination to maintain the existing order and their own position even under Roman rule. For this reason their religious and social base differed from that of the Pharisees, who enjoyed wide support among the people.

In Mark chapter 12, the Sadducees came to Jesus not to learn and believe the resurrection but to mock, with a perplexing question, the doctrine of the resurrection they did not believe, and to test Jesus. But Jesus rebuked them, saying that they were greatly mistaken because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God. Though they prided themselves on knowing the Law, they did not know the power of God, who raises the dead, or the truth of the resurrection contained in the Scriptures.

## [Question] 22. Mark 12:19–23—citing the case of seven brothers and one woman, what did the Sadducees ask?

On the basis of the Law of Moses, the Sadducees said that if a man dies leaving a wife and no children, his younger brother should take the wife and raise up offspring for his elder brother.

They presented the story that there were seven brothers; the first married a woman and died without offspring, and from the second to the seventh each in turn took her as wife, but all died leaving no offspring, and finally the woman also died. Then they asked Jesus whose wife she would be when the dead rise, since all seven had taken her as wife.

The Sadducees, who did not believe the resurrection, tried through this question to make the faith of the resurrection look contradictory in practice and to put Jesus in difficulty.

## [Question] 23. Mark 12:19—what kind of institution was the law of levirate marriage the Sadducees cited?

The law of levirate marriage was the institution by which, when brothers lived together in Israel and one of them died without a son, a brother of the dead man took the widow as his wife and raised up offspring for him. In Mark 12:19 the Sadducees summarized it: *"if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother."*

This institution is recorded in Deuteronomy 25:5–10. Before the dead man's wife married into another family, her husband's brother took her as his wife, and the first son she bore continued the line of the dead brother. In this way the dead man's name was not cut off from Israel, and his family and his inheritance were preserved. At the same time it carried the meaning of protecting, within the family, a woman left without husband or son.

If the husband's brother refused to carry out this duty, the woman made the fact known to the elders at the gate, and the

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procedure was carried out of removing his sandal and rebuking him before the elders. Therefore this was not a mere private marriage custom but an institution that prescribed the covenant community's responsibility to continue the name and the family of a dead brother.

Since this law was an institution given to the people of Israel in the time of the Old Testament, it must not be applied as commanding the same manner of marriage to all believers today. The Sadducees used this institution to attack the faith of the resurrection, asking whose wife among the seven brothers the woman would be at the resurrection.

## [Question] 24. Mark 12:24—what did Jesus say the Sadducees did not know, so that they were mistaken?

Jesus said that the Sadducees were mistaken about the resurrection because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

They prided themselves on knowing the Law of Moses, but they did not realize the resurrection of the dead to which the Scriptures testify. They also thought of the resurrection as the life and the marriage relationships of this world repeated as they are. This was because they did not know the power of God, who raises the dead again and changes the resurrected into a new body and a new life.

Therefore knowing much of the Scriptures merely in the letter is not enough. One must believe the will of God contained in the Scriptures without putting his own thoughts first, and must acknowledge the power of God, who goes beyond human experience and ability and raises even the dead.

## [Question] 25. Mark 12:25—in what state did Jesus say people will be when they rise from the dead?

Jesus said that when people rise from the dead, they *"neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."* It means that after the resurrection the institution of marriage—marrying, forming a family, and bearing children to continue one's descendants as on this earth—is no longer needed.

This word does not mean that a resurrected person becomes an angel. Man exists as a resurrected human being, but he leaves the present life, which needs marriage, death, and the change of generations, and lives forever before God like the angels. The world of the resurrection is not a place where the present bodily order is repeated as it is, but a place where the spiritual and eternal order of life that God gives is realized.

Because the Sadducees thought that even after the resurrection the marriage relationships of the present world would continue as they are, they raised a contradiction, citing the seven brothers who had taken one woman as wife. But Jesus made clear that the premise of their question was wrong. The law of levirate marriage was given for the life of this earth, where a family line can be cut off by death; in the life of the resurrection, where one does not die again, marriage for raising up offspring is not needed.

The hope of the resurrection is also connected with the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished. Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and then rose from the dead. The righteous who have received the remission of sin by believing this gospel of the water and the

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Spirit will also take part in the resurrection of life when the Lord comes again and will live with Him forever.

Therefore the believer must not think of the resurrection as a simple extension of the present life. He must believe the power of God, who raises the dead and changes the corruptible body into an eternal body, and must hold the hope of living forever with God beyond the relationships and the circumstances of this world.

## [Question] 26. Mark 12:26–27—how did Jesus prove the resurrection to the Sadducees, who denied it?

Jesus proved the resurrection of the dead by directly quoting the writings of Moses, which the Sadducees counted as important. He put forward the word God spoke when He appeared to Moses in the burning bush in the book of Moses: *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."*

When God spoke this word to Moses, a long time had already passed since Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died in the flesh. Yet God did not speak of Himself as One who had been their God in the past; He said that He is still their God. This shows that the covenant relationship made with God did not end with the death of the body, and that they are alive before God and will rise bodily in the future.

On this ground Jesus declared, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."* If the living God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then they are not people completely annihilated by death. Since God does not leave His people in death forever but raises them again, the resurrection

surely takes place.

Jesus' quoting the book of Moses exposes the Sadducees' error all the more clearly. While claiming to acknowledge the Law of Moses, they did not realize the evidence of the resurrection contained in it. Because they read the Scriptures interpreting them according to their own fixed thinking, they denied the power of God, who raises the dead, and were greatly mistaken.

Spiritually, too, God is the God of the person who has obtained life by faith. Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John, died on the Cross, and rose again. The righteous person who has received the remission of all his sins by believing this gospel is God's child, alive spiritually, and in the future his body also will rise and he will live with God forever. Therefore the faith of the resurrection is not a vague expectation but a sure hope grounded on the living God and on Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead.

## [Question] 27. What is the resurrection the Bible speaks of?

The resurrection the Bible speaks of is not the memory or consciousness of a dead person being passed on to another person, nor is it reincarnation, in which the soul moves into another body. It is the actual work of life in which God raises the dead again and changes the body that has died and decayed into a new, incorruptible body. Therefore Resurrection also differs from resuscitation, in which a dead person returns to mortal life for a time and later dies again, lives a while longer, and then dies again. The resurrected person comes to exist clothed in the eternal body God gives.

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The center and the ground of the resurrection is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:20 says, *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and rose from the dead in three days. Jesus' resurrection testifies that the judgment of the sins He bore was completely finished and that the work of salvation was fully accomplished. And as Jesus rose as the firstfruits, His resurrection guarantees that those who believe in Him will also rise in the future.

The resurrected body is not like the present weak and decaying body. 1 Corinthians 15 says, *"The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power,"* and *"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."* The resurrected body is a glorious and spiritual body not bound by disease, aging, and death. That Jesus said in Mark chapter 12 that the resurrected neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven also shows that the life of the resurrection is an eternal life wholly different from the bodily order of the present world.

The Bible says that not only the righteous but all the dead will rise again by God's power. Jesus said, *"the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice,"* and that some will come forth to *"the resurrection of life"* and some to *"the resurrection of condemnation."* Therefore the resurrection itself does not automatically give salvation and happiness to everyone. The righteous, who have received the remission of sin by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, take part in the resurrection of life and live with the Lord forever, but the person who has refused God's salvation

to the end rises in order to be judged.

Taking part in the resurrection of life is not a reward obtained by man's good deeds or religious merits. Since man cannot remove his own sins by himself, he must believe with the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood and receive the remission of all his sins. On the person who believes this gospel the Holy Spirit comes, and his soul obtains new life. The righteous person born again spiritually in this way is a person who has life before God even if his body dies, and when the Lord comes again his body also will rise again as an incorruptible body.

1 Thessalonians chapter 4 says that when the Lord descends, the dead in Christ will rise first, and the believers who remain alive will also be changed and will meet the Lord together with them, and so will always be with the Lord. Therefore, to the believer the resurrection is not a vague comfort that life somehow continues after death; it is the sure promise that Jesus Himself will come again, raise the dead, and have them live with Him forever.

On the other hand, the resurrection of condemnation shows that the person who has refused God's salvation cannot escape all responsibility by dying. God will raise the dead again and judge them according to their deeds, and the person not recorded in the Book of Life receives the punishment of the second death. Thus God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, and He is the Judge, who rules all life and death.

Therefore the resurrection the Bible speaks of is, for the righteous who have received the remission of sin by believing the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the completion of eternal life and hope; but for the person who has refused the gospel, it is the confirmation of the judgment that cannot be avoided. The believer must not regard death as the end, but

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must believe God, who will raise him again, and live on this earth serving the gospel and waiting for the Lord.

## [Question] 28. Explain the work and the position of the scribes appearing in Mark 12:28.

The scribes of Jesus' day were not simply people who copied writings; they were experts in the Law, who professionally studied, interpreted, and taught the Law of Moses to the people. They copied and preserved the scrolls of Scripture, read the Law and explained its meaning, and judged how it should be applied to the various problems of daily life. They also presented legal answers on religious and social matters such as marriage and divorce, property and inheritance, vows, and Sabbath regulations.

Some scribes helped in the decisions of courts or drew up legal documents, and some took part as members of the Sanhedrin, exercising religious and political influence. They were recognized as a learned class distinguished from the ordinary people, who had no knowledge of the Law, and they were called *"teacher"* or *"Rabbi"* by the people and received considerable respect.

*"Scribe"* and *"Pharisee"* are not entirely the same name. "Scribe" refers to the duty and the expertise of studying and interpreting the Law, while "Pharisee" refers to a group that follows a particular religious position and tradition. Many scribes belonged to the party of the Pharisees, but not every scribe was necessarily a Pharisee.

The scribe of Mark 12:28 heard the dispute between Jesus and the Sadducees, acknowledged that Jesus had answered well, and came and asked which is the first of all the commandments.

Unlike the leaders who had earlier tried to catch Jesus in His words, he listened carefully to Jesus' answer, and Jesus, seeing that he answered wisely, said that he was not far from the kingdom of God. This shows that apart from the fact that the scribes held a high religious position, what matters is with what heart each person hears and receives the Word of God.

## [Question] 29. What was the question of the one scribe recorded in Mark 12:28?

One scribe, hearing Jesus answer the Sadducees' question well, came up and asked, *"Which is the first commandment of all?"*

He was asking Jesus which, among the many commandments God has given, is the greatest and foremost commandment.

## [Question] 30. Mark 12:29–31—how did Jesus state the first commandment and the second commandment to the scribe?

Concerning the first commandment, Jesus said, *"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength."* To believe God alone as the true Lord and to love God with all one's heart and all one's life is the greatest and foremost commandment.

Concerning the second commandment, He said, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* It means to count precious and love the life and the needs of one's neighbor, just as one

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cares for and values oneself.

Jesus said that there is no other commandment greater than these. The heart that loves God must appear in a life that loves one's neighbor, and true love toward one's neighbor also comes from loving God and obeying His will.

## [Question] 31. Mark 12:32–33—what did the scribe say on hearing Jesus' words?

The scribe acknowledged that Jesus' words were right and answered that it is true that God is one and there is no other but He.

He also said that to love God with all the heart, with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as one's own body, is better than offering all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices. He answered from the realization that what God wants is not outward acts of sacrifice but true love toward God and one's neighbor.

## [Question] 32. What does the word *"You are not far from the kingdom of God"* recorded in Mark 12:34 mean?

Jesus saw the scribe answer wisely that God is only one, and that to love God with all the heart, understanding, and strength and to love one's neighbor as one's own body is better than all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices. So He said, *"You are not far from the kingdom of God."*

This means that the scribe had rightly understood the core of the Law and realized the fact that true love toward God and

one's neighbor matters more than outward sacrifices and religious ceremonies. He did not unconditionally refute Jesus' words or try to catch Him; he acknowledged them as right words. Such a heart and realization were the appearance of one who had come near to the kingdom of God.

But Jesus did not say that he had already entered the kingdom of God; He said, *"not far."* Knowing God's commandments accurately and agreeing with Jesus' words does not in itself bring the remission of sin and entrance into the kingdom of God. Going beyond knowing the commandments, one must realize that he is a weak being who cannot love God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, and all his strength, and cannot love his neighbor as his own body.

The Law was given not so that man might boast of his own righteousness, but so that before the Word he might realize his sin and his inability and seek the Savior. That scribe came near the kingdom of God by understanding the center of the commandments, but to enter the kingdom of God he had to believe in Jesus, who stood right before him, as the Son of God and his Savior.

Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and then rose from the dead. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart receives the remission of all his sins, receives the Holy Spirit, and enters the kingdom of God. The life of loving God and one's neighbor is not a merit for obtaining salvation but the fruit of faith that the righteous person who has received the remission of sin through this gospel bears in thanksgiving for God's love.

Therefore the word *"You are not far from the kingdom of*

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*God"* carries the meaning that understanding and acknowledging the truth is very important, but that one must not stay in knowledge and agreement; he must believe with his heart the salvation Jesus accomplished.

## [Question] 33. What does Mark 12:35 say Jesus intended to make clear by quoting Psalm 110?

Jesus quoted Psalm 110 to make clear that the Christ is not only a human king to be born as David's descendant, but the Son of God and the Lord, whom even David called *"my Lord."*

The scribes taught the fact that the Christ comes from David's lineage, but they did not fully realize the fact that He is the divine One, who exists before David and receives David's worship. Jesus came in the flesh as David's descendant, but He is originally David's Lord and the Christ, who would sit at the right hand of God.

Therefore this word shows the fact that we must not think of the Messiah only as a political king who would free Israel from Roman rule, but must believe Him as the Son of God and the Savior, who overcomes and rules all His enemies.

## [Question] 34. State the content of Psalm 110 quoted in Mark 12:36.

In Mark 12:36 Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, which David recorded moved by the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 110:1 is recorded: *"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"*

Mark quotes this: *"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My*

*right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"* Here David calls the Christ who is to come his *"Lord,"* and he prophesied that God would seat the Christ at His own right hand and subdue all His enemies under His feet.

## [Question] 35. Mark 12:38–40—what kind of scribes did Jesus tell the multitude to beware of?

Jesus said to beware of the scribes, who go around in long robes, displaying their religious position, and who love to receive greetings of respect from people in the marketplaces. They sat in the best seats in the synagogues and took the best places at feasts, wanting to be exalted by people.

Also, while praying at length to look like godly people on the outside, in reality they devoured the possessions of the widows they should have protected. They used the position of a leader who serves God and their knowledge of the Law to take away the property of weak people and fill their own profit.

What Jesus rebuked was not the long robes or the long prayers themselves, but the hypocrisy and the greed that sought recognition from people. He said to beware of religious leaders who act as if they serve God well outwardly while seeking honor, high position, and wealth within.

Because they knew much of the Word of God and stood in the position of teaching others, their responsibility was all the greater. Jesus warned that those who disguise godliness and use weak people in this way will receive an even heavier judgment.

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## [Question] 36. Mark 12:40—what was the sin of the scribes, and what is its result?

The sin of the scribes was that they devoured the possessions of the widows they should have protected and cared for, while praying at length in hypocrisy to look godly before people. They used the position of teaching the Law and their religious authority for their own profit, and took property by exploiting weak people.

Their sin did not stop at simple greed. Since they gained people's trust by dressing themselves up as though serving God and then abused that trust, they committed also the sin of hypocrisy and deception carried on in God's name. With their lips they prayed to God, but in their actual lives they defied God's justice and love.

Jesus said that such scribes *"will receive greater condemnation."* Because they stood in the position of knowing and teaching the Word of God and yet abused that authority, they bear a greater responsibility than ordinary people and will receive a heavier judgment.

## [Question] 37. Mark 12:42—how much money did the poor widow put into the treasury?

The poor widow put two mites, that is, one quadrans, into the treasury.

The mite was one of the smallest units of coin in use at that time. In people's eyes it was a very small amount, but it was all the widow had, her whole livelihood.

## [Question] 38. Mark 12:41–44—what can we learn from the offering of the poor widow, who put in all she had?

The offering of the poor widow teaches the fact that God looks not at the amount of the material things a person gives but at the faith, the thanksgiving, and the devotion contained in it. Many rich people put in much money out of their abundance, but the poor widow put in two mites, that is, one quadrans. In people's eyes it was a very small amount, but Jesus said that the widow had put in more than all the others.

Jesus evaluated it so not because of the size of the amount the widow gave, but because He saw how much of what she had she gave. The rich gave a part out of their abundance, keeping enough for their living, but the widow, in her poverty, gave *"all that she had, her whole livelihood."* In those two mites were contained the faith that entrusted her life to God and depended on Him, and the heart that wanted to give God her most precious thing.

This word does not mean that God is pleased only with the offering of the poor rather than of the rich. It is precious when a person who has received much gives much in faith and thanksgiving, and it is also precious when a person who has little gives little. God does not compare people's offering amounts with one another; He looks at the heart and the faith with which each person gave within the circumstances he has received. Therefore there is no need to be discouraged, thinking one cannot serve God because his material things are few, nor should one boast of his faith before people because he has given much.

The widow's offering also shows that true faith does not put calculation and self-preservation first. The widow did not

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clutch her two mites, thinking they were all that would hold up her living; she believed God and gave them. This was an expression of the faith that everything has come from God and that God cares also for her life and her future. The believer must not think that he himself is the owner of his material things, but must live as a steward who rightly uses what God has entrusted for the gospel, the church, and his neighbors.

But this word must not be used as a command that everyone must offer his whole livelihood without fail. Immediately before, Jesus sternly rebuked the scribes who devour the possessions of widows. Therefore, for a religious leader to use this word to force unreasonable offerings on poor people, or to teach that one must give offerings in order to receive the remission of sin and blessing, is to go against the meaning of the passage. What is given to God must come not from compulsion or fear but from a willing heart thankful for grace.

Our salvation, too, is not bought with material things or devotion. Jesus bore all the sins of humankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, gave up His life receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead, saving us completely. Man receives the remission of sin without price by believing this gospel of the water and the Spirit. Offerings and service are not a price for obtaining the remission of sin but the fruit of faith borne in thanksgiving for the grace of the Lord, who first gave everything to save us.

Therefore what we must learn from the poor widow is not simply the act of giving much material wealth, but the heart that believes God and gives gladly even what is small, and the faith that entrusts one’s life to God. The believer should serve God willingly according to his circumstances and his faith, and use the material things, the time, and the talents entrusted to him for the gospel and for the work of giving life to souls. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

# Jesus rose again and became the living God of those who have received the remission of sin

**< Mark 12:18-27 >**

**"Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.'"**

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Today is Resurrection Sunday. We keep Resurrection Sunday in commemoration of the day Jesus rose again. In a little while comes Pentecost, the Sunday of the Holy Spirit's descent, the day commemorating the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples after Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Before this there was Lent, the season commemorating the period of Jesus' suffering.

Those who have received the remission of sin and believe the Lord rightly do not doubt the fact that Jesus rose again. Jesus clearly rose again. But those who have not received the remission of sin, though they believe in Jesus, doubt how He could have risen; and when they apply it to themselves, they say they simply cannot believe that one could die and live again. Their heart is that they would believe Jesus' resurrection, but they cannot believe that they themselves will live again after dying.

Greeting this Resurrection Sunday, joy and sorrow rise together in my heart. For some will rise again when the Lord comes and live together with the Lord forever, while others will rise again after the Millennial Kingdom has passed and enter the terrible fire of hell.

I know that this morning many cities held united meetings commemorating the resurrection. But in many places, after a few words that Jesus rose again, the meeting will have gone on to resolutions and all kinds of campaigns to revive this difficult economy. Such things, however, are nothing more than a social movement that has nothing to do with Jesus' resurrection or with one's own faith. Greeting the Easter of Jesus' resurrection, we must inspect our faith. We must look at what faith we really have, what kind of God God is to us, and what relationship He has with us.

Jesus rose again and became the living God
of those who have received the remission of sin

## The God of the living is the God of those who have received the remission of sin

Our Lord said, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."* He also said, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."* Then what is the meaning of the Lord's word that He is the God of the living? Whose God is He, and who is a living one?

It is the word that He is the God of the one who believes our Lord, receives the remission of sin, and whose soul, taking part in the Lord's resurrection, has been saved from sin and come alive again—the God of the one who has a living soul. That is, He is the God of those who have received the remission of sin. God is the God of Abraham, the father of faith, the God of his son Isaac, and the God of his grandson Jacob; He is the God of those who have inherited faith.

God is the God of us born-again people, the God of those who have received the remission of sin. God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. Since we have now received the remission of sin and become God's children, the God we believe in is our very own God. We believed in Jesus Christ and were saved from sin, and so we also came alive; and since Jesus Christ is God, who lives forever, He is at all times the God of His saved people.

God has become my God and yours, and as the living God He always fellowships with us, speaks to us, and works together with us. We must not let Resurrection Sunday pass as a mere ceremony. God is the God of the living, so we must examine whether that God is living in our hearts. Only when we have the faith that believes that God rose from the dead, ascended, and is still living now does this Resurrection Sunday become a great benefit to our faith.

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## The baptism Jesus received from John, and the Cross

Our Lord came to this earth, was brought up under His earthly mother, and began His public ministry when He turned thirty. It was for the work of saving, delivering, and bringing humankind to life from all sins. In the Old Testament book of Malachi God said that He would send Elijah, and to that John—of whom Jesus Himself testified, *"he is Elijah who is to come" (Matthew 11:14)*—the representative of humankind with the spirit of Elijah, Jesus at the Jordan River received the baptism by which all the sins of humankind passed on to Him.

This was a work Jesus did in obedience to the will of God the Father. Jesus' coming to this earth, His receiving baptism from John the Baptist, and His dying on the Cross were all works done in obedience to the will of God the Father. At the Jordan River, Jesus said to John the Baptist, *"Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15)*. Saying that He must receive baptism from him, the representative prophet of humankind, and bear all the sins of humankind, and that He had come because God had so commanded, He received the baptism John gave and took over all your sins and mine. And He went to the Cross and died in our place, and rose again in three days.

Jesus had said before, *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19)*. People, not knowing spiritual things, could not understand that word; they took it to mean tearing down the temple the people of Israel had built over long years and raising it up in three days, and they were so astonished that they regarded Him as a madman. But that word meant, before He died on the Cross: put My body to death, and I will rise again in three days. Thus Jesus took over all the sins of

humankind with the baptism He received from John at the Jordan River, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose again, completing salvation.

In fact, man is born with a spirit, but he is also born with flesh. That is why human life is a crossing of joys and sorrows. Because man was born into this world with flesh, he cannot escape this flesh, and that is his sorrow. Unable to escape the flesh, he constantly worries how he is to live with this flesh, and because of the sins the flesh commits, he carries a grieving heart until he dies.

Living in this world, we cannot live apart from sin. As long as we have this flesh, we sin at all times and live in sin. That is why our Lord delivered you and me from the sin of the world. All the sins we commit from our mother's womb until we enter the grave, our Lord bore with the baptism He received from John, and He was judged and died on the Cross in our place. The sinless Jesus, by receiving baptism, took over all the sins of you and me and everyone in this world, and washed us wholly clean, without sin.

Dear fellow believers, all the filth of this world is washed away not with fire but with water. What is in the sewer cannot all be burned up with fire. However strong the fire, it burns only the visible part; it cannot wash things wholly clean. But even when dirty water flows in the underground sewer, when rain comes it washes all that filth away and sends it down to the sea, and the seawater that has received such filth still surges with waves, clean even now. Truly water does the work of washing away filth. In the same way, Jesus received baptism in order to bear the sins of all people, and so He died on the Cross and rose again in three days.

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## His death is our death, and His resurrection is our resurrection

Why did Jesus have to come to this earth, why did He have to receive baptism, why did He have to die on the Cross, and why did He have to rise again? It was exactly to bring back to life your soul and mine, which could not but die because of sin. To bring us to life, who could only die because of sin, the Lord came to this earth, received baptism, died on the Cross, and rose again.

His death is our death, and His resurrection is our resurrection. Because He came to this earth to save us, His coming, His receiving baptism, His being nailed to the Cross, His rising again in three days, and His ascending into heaven were all so that He might do the very same for you and me. If Jesus had ended with receiving baptism and dying on the Cross, you and I would also have ended with that death and had no hope. But by rising again, Jesus became the God of salvation to us, and He brought our souls back to life and gave us new life.

Jesus was nailed to the Cross and died. The chief priests handed Jesus over to Pilate, and when Pilate delivered Him to be crucified, the Roman soldiers nailed Him to the Cross and made Him shed all the blood of His body and die. In that way Jesus received the judgment in our place.

On the Cross Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" (Matthew 27:46)* Darkness came over the whole world, and this was God the Father turning His back on His own Son, who had borne all the sins of the world. Because He turned His face away, saying, as it were, 'You are My Son, but because you have fully borne the sin of the world you must die, and I cannot help you,' the execution ground of Calvary was dark for three hours. After three hours the day began to grow

light again, and Jesus said, *"It is finished!" (John 19:30)* and breathed His last.

Jesus breathed His last at three o'clock on Friday afternoon. That evening was the Sabbath, and since the Jews could do no work on the Sabbath and could not leave a body hanging, they had to take the body down. So they took Jesus down from the Cross and laid Him in a tomb. Jesus entered the tomb at sundown on Friday, was there on Saturday, and rose again at dawn on Sunday. He rose again in three days.

## The risen Lord and the empty tomb

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb with spices to anoint Jesus. They worried among themselves who would roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for them, but when they lifted their eyes, that very large stone had already been rolled away. The women entered the tomb, and seeing a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side, they were alarmed.

The young man said, *"Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him" (Mark 16:6)*. And he told them to go and tell His disciples and Peter that He was going before them into Galilee, and that there they would see Him, as He had said to them. The women, trembling greatly and amazed, went out and fled from the tomb, and being afraid, they said nothing to anyone.

Jesus rose again and truly became the God of salvation to His disciples. After His resurrection the Lord showed Himself and testified for some forty days, and He even showed the nail marks

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in His hands. When the disciples were keeping the doors locked in fear, Jesus appeared, passing through the wall, and asked why they still had no faith.

All the other disciples believed, but Thomas said that he must see to believe—that even if he died, he could not believe. Then Jesus appeared to Thomas and told him to see the nail marks in His hands and to put his hand into the spear mark in His side. Only after Thomas put his hand into Jesus' side did he believe that the Lord had risen again. Then our Lord said, *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29)*.

Jesus became the God of the one who believes through the Word of God, the one who believes that God is alive, the one who believes that God came as the Savior, bore all your sins and mine with His baptism, carried them to the Cross and died, and rose again—that is, the God of the living. God is always alive, and He becomes the God of the one who believes that Jesus Christ has brought back to life our souls, which were dead because of sin, the one who believes that Jesus has become his Savior, the one who has that living faith.

Our Lord came to this earth and not only removed all our sins but also rose again from the dead and became the God of those who believe in Him. Through His life of thirty-three years the Lord received baptism, was nailed to the Cross, suffered pain, and received hatred, and that life He endured for a time for all humankind in this world. Because the Lord who saved us is God, He could not remain in death. His receiving baptism for us for a time and dying on the Cross was to remove your sins and mine, bring us back to life, and give us new life.

Our Lord rose again and sits at the right hand of God the Father. As the Creator, and as the Judge of the whole world at the last, He is waiting. The Lord is alive and has promised to give salvation to whoever hears the gospel of the water and the

Spirit and believes it with the heart, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to those who believe. To the one who believes and acknowledges with the heart the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, our Lord has sealed him with the Holy Spirit, saying, as it were, that however lacking and weak his flesh is, and though he sins, he is His child. So our Lord has become the God of the living, the God of the saved.

## Believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, like those who looked at the bronze serpent

The way of truth, the way of salvation, and the way of the resurrection, by which we believe in Jesus and receive the remission of sin, is the way of faith. When Moses of the Old Testament was leading the people of Israel in the wilderness, the people complained against God and Moses because there was no meat and no water. At this God was angry and sent fiery serpents into the camp to bite the people, and those who were bitten swelled up and were dying.

When Moses prayed before God to remit this people's sin of complaining, God said to make a bronze serpent, hang it on a pole, and have the people look at it: whoever looked at this bronze serpent would live again and be healed. So Moses made a bronze serpent, hung it on the top of a pole, and cried out that whoever had been bitten by a fiery serpent would be healed if he looked at this bronze serpent.

But some people stubbornly refused to the end, saying how could looking make them live, and they died without looking; while others, saying they had nothing to lose, turned their necks with all their strength and looked once at the bronze serpent. Then, the moment they looked, their swollen bodies returned to

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normal as if washed clean. Those who looked said that this was indeed the truth—they had merely looked and were healed. They urged the people beside them not to die but only to look, but those who could not believe said to the end that they would rather die than believe. Only those who looked at the bronze serpent lived.

Dear fellow believers, this is exactly the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Satan the Devil injects sin into people and makes them sin until the end of the world, but our Lord received baptism at the Jordan River, bore all that sin, and was judged and died on the Cross in our place. His receiving baptism was to wash away our sins; His dying on the Cross was to put Satan the Devil to death; and His rising again was to become the living God to those who believe and to give them salvation.

Just as the venom of the serpent's bite all drained away and the body became whole when one looked up at the bronze serpent hung on the pole, whoever looks with his heart at the fact that Jesus came to this earth, received baptism and so carried all our sins, and died on the Cross for us, and believes it, receives salvation from all sins and becomes a child of God. Man believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit with his heart and obtains new life before God, becoming a living one and a righteous one; and this salvation is not achieved by man's works—just as the serpent's venom was not cured by taking medicine or receiving serum.

All of us human beings were bitten by Satan the Devil and caught the plague of sin, and every person's soul was dying because of that sin. But our Lord came to this earth to remove all this venom, received baptism and took all that venom over onto Himself, and, receiving the judgment on the Cross, nailed Satan the Devil to death together with His own body. The Scripture says, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He*

*was bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5)*; by His being bruised we have been healed.

It is said, *"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."* I believe that Jesus bore all that sin with the baptism He received from John and died on the Cross. We must believe with the heart that Jesus was nailed to the Cross because of my sins. I believe that Jesus' rising again was to bring me, who believe, back to life. This is faith, the faith of the living, the faith of the resurrection.

## Believe with the heart and become a living one

Jesus became the God of those who believe in Him with the heart and obtain salvation. Since He said, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living,"* Jesus became the God of the living: the God of the one who believes that He has saved him, the one who believes that God is alive, the one who believes that God came to this earth and removed all his sins. Having become the God of such believers, He lives, and so He helps His people at all times, and even now He sits at the right hand of the throne of God.

Living in this world, we sometimes think of God as if He were a dead God. Often we regard our faith as merely being saved and just going to heaven. But it is not so. God is not a dead God but the living God, and we, too, are not dead before God but God's saved people. That is why God hears the prayers of His people and helps them. God is alive, and we also are alive.

The one who has received the remission of sin is a living one, and the one who has not received the remission of sin is a dead one. The person who does not know this gospel of the water and the Spirit and has not received the remission of sin is dead, and

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so God does not become his God; his faith and his worship are all invalid. But the one who fully believes with the heart the gospel of the baptism Jesus received from John and of the Cross, receives Jesus as his Savior, and receives the remission of sin is before God a saved person, a righteous person, and a living one. The God who saved us is alive even now. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Dear fellow believers, I know that our flesh is weary and hard-pressed with many hardships and illnesses. But greeting this Easter, we must keep in mind that God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. He is the God of exactly you and me, who have received the remission of sin. God is not the God of sinners but the God of the saved—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

Dear fellow believers, you must surely hold this living faith and live by faith. Have you really received the remission of sin with your heart? If you have received the remission of sin by believing with your heart the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, I hope you will confess it with your mouth. We cannot but say that we are not sinners but righteous. Are you a sinner, or are you righteous? If you are righteous, God becomes your God, and that God is alive.

On this Easter, I hope you will gather up your faith once more, believe in the living God, hold the faith that that God is the God of us the righteous and my own God, and, whatever you meet until the Lord comes, believe God, seek help before God, and live by faith. Dear fellow believers, even in hardship, it is enough to have faith. Believe that God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. God has become my God and yours.

To a sinner, even if Jesus had risen a hundred times, it has nothing to do with him. Just as a great sum of money coming into another's house has nothing to do with oneself, so to the one

who must receive the remission of sin by believing with his heart the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, and yet does not believe, Jesus' birth, His baptism, His death on the Cross, and His resurrection have nothing to do with him. They concern only the one who believes. His living is our living again; His receiving baptism is His bearing all our sins; and His sitting at the right hand of God's throne in glory is so that He may make believers God's children and have them enjoy that glory in the future. This is living faith.

God has given us true faith, so I hope you also will hold true faith. In this age, without faith one dies; still more, without the Church of God one dies. Even a person who has received the remission of sin—if he does not hear the Word of God for just one month, his spirit and his flesh die away together. Our coming out to the worship service and hearing the Word is not a matter of our offering something to God. As God sent down manna in the wilderness, the Sunday service, the Wednesday service, and every meeting time are times when He sends down to us manna, the food of life.

Before we were born again, we thought only that we offer worship before God. But after receiving the remission of sin it changed. It is not that we offer something; it is that we receive daily before God. As the Lord taught us to ask, *"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11)*, God daily sends down to His people the food they need to live on this earth. When one receives the remission of sin, everything changes, so that, as the word says, *"old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17)*—faith, church, soul, and status all become new.

Since it is said that the just shall live by faith, we must live by faith, hearing the Word of God and cutting through these hard trials by faith. For God is the God of you who are saved. Dear

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fellow believers, keep close to the church. In this age, if you keep far from the church, it is the end. Coming to the church we gain what is spiritual and also what is of the flesh, so it is not so much that we serve the Lord as that the Lord serves us.

I, too, in the old days thought that I was helping God. But living for the Lord, I came to know the fact that it is not we who serve the Lord but the Lord who serves us. That is why the Church of God is important. The person who has received the remission of sin must live his life of faith within the church. The person who has received the remission of sin cannot be together with sinners; if a righteous person goes to a church of sinners and worships there, it is rather like eating poison. But when you come to a church of those who have received the remission of sin and hear the Word, your heart comes alive again, and when the heart comes alive, the work you do also goes well.

On this day we should gain the food of faith for our souls and hearts and obtain sound faith. Believing in the living God, and believing the truth that He is our God, let us truly gain strength and live well the rest of our days. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

# God, who becomes our Father and our Savior

**< Mark 12:18-27 >**

**"Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.'"**

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## The Sadducees, who misunderstood the resurrection

If we look at Mark chapter 12 from verse 18 on, the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and asked about one problem. In the custom of Israel, if an older brother died without children, his younger brother was to take the sister-in-law and raise up offspring for his brother. So they asked: seven brothers all took one woman as wife and died without offspring; at the resurrection, whose wife will she be? By the reasoning of those who believed there is a resurrection, it was a plausible question, but it was a question that came from the thinking of people who had not been born again.

The people of Israel had the institution that if an older brother married and died without offspring, the younger brother under him lived with the sister-in-law and raised up offspring for his brother. If there was still no offspring, the next brother had to continue in the same way. The Sadducees asked whose wife the woman would be at the resurrection, since seven brothers had lived with one woman in turn and all died without offspring. Citing the sort of logic in which the brothers would each claim her as his own wife, they tried to deny the resurrection.

Jesus said, *"Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"* And He said, *"When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."* The resurrected person is changed into a spiritual body and passes without hindrance even where there is a wall or a tree, rising again in a perfect body in which there is no such thing as men and women marrying. Just as God does not marry, there is no such thing for the resurrected. So to argue about the resurrection by the logic of this world is to be greatly mistaken.

### *"The God of the living"*

But what I want to speak about today is not that part but the words of verses 26 and 27. Jesus spoke citing the passage about the burning bush in the book of Moses. He reminded them of the word God spoke to Moses, *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"* and then said, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."* How do you receive this word?

When the living and the dead are divided before God, the dead refer to those who have no faith. Sinners, the descendants of Adam, are spiritually dead people. But those who have faith are the living; these are the people who have faith before God. Therefore God is the God of the living, that is, the God of those who have faith, the God of people who have been born again spiritually.

## God, who becomes our Father, our Savior, and our Guarantor

God is the One who becomes our Father, our Savior, and our Guarantor. God said that He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, and God the Father becomes the Father of those who have received the remission of sin and been born again. Jesus Christ called God Father, and that God becomes our Father as well. For Jesus Christ saved us and made us God's children, and the Spirit who is in Jesus Christ is the very same Spirit as the Holy Spirit who is in us.

Jesus Christ called God His own Father, and we, who have received the remission of sin through His sacrifice, also call God Father. Jesus Christ received baptism from John the Baptist and

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bore the sin of the world, received the judgment and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and rose again from the dead, accomplishing our salvation; so we have inherited the life of the Son. Therefore, when we pray, our calling God Father is because we have received the remission of sin through Jesus Christ within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

God the Father exists as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God the Father becomes our Father because we have received the remission of sin; the Son, Jesus Christ, is still God and becomes our Savior; and the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of God, is with us now. It is said that everyone who has the Spirit of God is a child of God, and the Holy Spirit comes upon and always dwells in the heart of the born-again person, who is without sin. This triune God differs in person and differs in the work each does, but in substance He is to us one God: our Father, our Savior, and the God who helps us.

Carrying on our life of faith, we have received the remission of sin in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus Christ did when He came to this earth, we received the remission of sin, and even as we live on this earth, all the sins of our hearts have been washed clean. Temptations still come in, and we have weak parts and can stumble in some things, but since in substance we have no sin, we call God Father. This is because Jesus Christ has become our God.

## The God of the covenant, who was present in the midst of the bush

This word Jesus quoted comes from the event of the bush in Exodus chapter 3. When Moses was tending the flock in the land of Midian, fire burned in a desert thornbush, yet the bush did not

burn away. When Moses drew near, the Lord said with His voice, *"Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5)*, and He also said, *"I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6)*. He was the very God of the covenant.

Why did God appear in fire in the midst of the bush and remain there without being consumed? It was to show that even in the midst of the harsh suffering of slavery that the people of Israel endured in Egypt for four hundred years, God was with them. In their suffering they called on the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob and pleaded for salvation, but evidence that God was with them was scarcely to be seen. Yet God heard all those prayers and pleadings, and He showed Moses that He is the God of the people of faith and of their descendants. The word that God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living means, spiritually speaking, that He is the God of born-again people.

God spoke of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because they are the fathers of faith. Abraham was a man who believed the Word; Isaac was a man of obedience, who inherited that faith as it was; and Jacob was a man who received God's favor and became God's child. God is thus the God of those who have faith, the God of those who obey the Word. We are the very descendants of that faith, and so God is our God.

## The God of the born-again

In English, God is written with a capital letter as God, and petty deities are written with a small letter as god. Believers and unbelievers alike call on God, but when a born-again person

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calls on God, there is a clear meaning within it. He calls believing that God becomes his Father, becomes his Savior, and walks with him even in adversity. To the born-again person God appears as the true and living God.

God does not become God to just anyone. Our Lord said that He is not the God of the dead but the God of the living, so to a person who has not been born again, though God exists, He does not become his Father, nor his Lord, nor the One who helps him. The God we call on is not the god of nature that people who have not been born again call on, but the living God, who truly lives and becomes the Father of the born-again, becomes their Savior, and is with them and helps them. Do you believe this fact?

As we live on this earth, how many hard things there are even for a born-again person! The psalmist says that even the truly born-again have suffering. Rather, the Apostle Paul suffered more because he had been born again, and Abraham could not but leave his hometown because he had met God. Countless people, because they met God, were rather persecuted and treated as strange people. But that God is the living One, who becomes the Father and the Lord of the born-again and helps us.

We must remember this fact. God is our very God, our Father and our Savior, the One who is with us and helps us while we live on this earth. We must believe that when we have no strength, the Lord Himself works and accomplishes that work—such a God is He. The God whom we born-again people believe in is the God of the living, the God who is with us and works together with us. Do you believe this fact?

What kind of God is God? God is the living One, the One who helps us. God is the God of the whole universe, yet He does not take His eyes off the born-again person; He watches over him, inclines His ear to what prayer he offers, and takes interest in what the desire of his heart is. And He does not merely watch;

at times He Himself comes down and works with us, protects us in the midst of danger, and intervenes.

Dear fellow believers, we do not live on this earth by ourselves alone. When we suffer hardship and agonize, we do not bear it by ourselves alone; God has come into us by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's dwelling within the heart and His moving about outside are different. The One who knocks outside the door and the One who has come in and dwells within are different. The person who has received the remission of sin, when he hears the Word of God, understands what that word means.

What kind of God is God? Would your God and my God be different? If we have truly been born again, that God is the same God. The only difference, if any, is whether one believes in the living God or believes in a dead God. If we believe in the living God, though adversities are many, we come to know what God's will is, and when we go forward in faith following that will, God works with us and helps us. Having become our Father, how would He refuse a child who wants to live according to His will? God surely helps and works.

God is present in all the born-again churches of the whole world. Do not narrow the scope to our church alone. Aaron the high priest had to embrace all the people, hear all the sins they had committed, and go before God with the offering so that those sins could be passed on and removed. The church is exactly so. God is the High Priest of heaven, and the Church of God is the high priest of the earth, so within the Word a person must be broad in embrace and large in heart.

## The living God, who is with us

I believed that God is a good God and a God of love, but it

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was after I was born again that I actually experienced it. Before I was born again, however diligently I believed, I experienced nothing, and the more I believed, the more I missed the mark; but after I was truly born again, when I followed the Lord, I was never once disappointed. In whatever situation, when I believed and followed the Lord, the Lord surely helped me. For after I was born again, God truly became my God.

Now I cannot tell you how good it is that God has become my God. I hope that when you saints suffer, you will be with God and remember that God has become your God. Then God begins to help the born-again. We must not think that God is God and we are simply ourselves. God is our God, the One who helps us.

The God we call on when we pray is not just any god. God hears our prayers, becomes our Father, becomes our Savior, and is with us and helps us—the One who becomes one body and one family with us. I hope you will thank God for being with us, and always give thanks for how great a grace and blessing you saints have received. Everyone calls God God, but they call without knowing what kind of God He is.

But when we call on God, we know that God is my Father, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and that God the Holy Spirit is together within me. Knowing and thanking the living God for helping us, praising God and calling on the Father, giving thanks that God is with us, I hope you will live a life of walking with God by the faith that believes God. We must deeply know and believe how great a favor it is to call God Father for the rest of our days, and how great a privilege and blessing is the fact that God has become my God and yours. I hope you will praise and thank God, carry on your life in society and at home, serve the church, and live for the glorious will of God through the church. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

# God, who becomes the Father of those who have received the remission of sin

**< Mark 12:18-27 >**

**"Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.'"**

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I would like to look at the passage above with verses 26 and 27 at the center. The Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus and asked a question about the resurrection. As in the words of verses 19 through 23, it was the custom of the people of Israel that if an older brother died without offspring, his younger brother lived with the sister-in-law. To our thinking it looks ethically out of line, but in this part is contained a deep meaning that God wants to speak.

## The Sadducees' question and Jesus' answer

The Sadducees asked, when the seven brothers and the one sister-in-law have risen, whose wife the woman would become. Jesus pointed out that they were misunderstanding because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, and said, *"When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."* When we rise again, we are changed into a spiritual body, and so in the kingdom of heaven there is no marrying as on earth.

## *"The God of the living"*

In verses 26 and 27 Jesus asked the Sadducees whether they had not read, in the passage about the burning bush in the book of Moses, the word God spoke: *"I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"* and He said, *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living."* When the living and the dead are divided before God, those without faith are called the dead, and sinners, the descendants of Adam, are the spiritually dead.

As in the word *"Moreover He said, 'I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'" (Exodus 3:6)*, God says that He is the God of the three forefathers who had faith. Abraham was a man who believed the Word, Isaac was a man of obedience, and Jacob was a man who received God's favor. That is, He is saying that He is the God of those born again of water and the Spirit.

## God, who becomes the Father of those who have received the remission of sin

God, as the God of those who have received the remission of sin, becomes our Savior, our Father, and our Guarantor. As God the Father became the Father of Jesus, He becomes our Father as well. For Jesus saved us, and God has made us His children, and the Holy Spirit is within us. The person who has received the remission of sin and new life by believing the salvation Jesus completed—bearing all sins with the baptism He received from John, receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rising again—calls God Father.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are called God. The Father becomes our Father because we have received the remission of sin; the Son, Jesus, is still God and is our Savior; and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, always dwells in the person who has been born again and received the remission of sin.

God's appearing in the unconsumed bush was to show the people of Israel, who were in the suffering of harsh slavery in Egypt, that God was with them. When the people of Israel suffered in Egypt for four hundred years, they held faith and waited for God, but no evidence of His being with them was to

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be seen. Yet God heard their pleading and became the God of the people who had faith, and He revealed to Moses that He is the God of the descendants of the people of faith.

## The God of the living is the God of the born-again

That He is the God of the living means that He is the God of the born-again. Have you ever been born again? When a born-again person calls on God, the meaning is that he is calling on the living God, who becomes his Father and his Savior and walks together with him through the adversities of the world. On the other hand, to a person who has not been born again, God is God, but He does not become the Lord of his salvation, nor his Father, nor his Shepherd.

When God speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He speaks of them as people who are surely born again, the living. The God we now call on is not the nature god that people who have not been born again call on. Because of what Jesus did when He came to this earth, we have received the remission of sin. Temptations still come in, and we are weak and can stumble, but in substance we have no sin, and our calling God Father is because Jesus has become our Savior and our God.

## The living God, who is with us even in suffering

The psalmist says that even the born-again have suffering. Rather, the Apostle Paul suffered more because he had been born again, and Abraham, too, could not but leave his hometown because he had met God. Countless people are persecuted because they have met God. But not so many people know the

fact that that God is alive, becomes the Father and the Lord of the born-again, and helps us; so we must remember and believe this fact.

God does not take His eyes off the born-again person; He hears his prayers and the desires of his heart, and at times He comes down and works with him and protects him in the midst of danger. God has come into us by the Holy Spirit. Do you feel and experience this fact? The Holy Spirit's dwelling within and His knocking at the door outside are different, and the person who has received the remission of sin understands what this word means. As the high priest passed the people's sins onto the offering and washed them away, Jesus Christ, as the High Priest of heaven and earth, bore our sins.

If we have truly been born again, that God is the same; the only difference, if any, is whether one believes in the living God or in a dead God. If we believe in the living God, though adversities are many, we know God's will and so go forward holding faith. Before I was born again, the more I believed in God, the more it came to nothing; but after I was born again, when I followed the Lord, the Lord never once disappointed me. The faith of the born-again is not a dead faith but a living faith.

## The privilege of calling God Father

When we praise God for becoming the God of believers, call on the Father, and live the rest of our days walking with God, that marvelous grace is with us. We must deeply know how great a privilege and favor it is to call God Father.

Knowing and thanking the living God for helping us, I hope you will serve the church and live for the glory of God and for the Lord. God is the God of those who have received grace, that

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is, of the living, the God of those who have been justified. If even the least bit of sin remains in your heart, I hope you will know the fact that God is not your God. For God is not the God of those who hold a dead faith. Know that to hold the faith of the living, you must receive the grace of the remission of sin. We thank God for becoming our God and our Lord, and we praise our Lord, who has saved us from the power of darkness. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

# Believe in the God of the living, beyond your present calculations

**< Mark 12:18-27 >**

**"Then some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him; and they asked Him, saying: 'Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves his wife behind, and leaves no children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife; and dying, he left no offspring. And the second took her, and he died; nor did he leave any offspring. And the third likewise. So the seven had her and left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, when they rise, whose wife will she be? For all seven had her as wife.' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.'"**

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## We must look at the starting point of a question more than its form

The Sadducees were people who said there is no resurrection. Yet the question they brought to Jesus sounds, on the surface, like a question about marriage relations after the resurrection. If one woman became in turn the wife of seven brothers and all died without offspring, whose wife will she be at the resurrection? The question is detailed and the case is elaborate. Since they even brought in the institution Moses recorded, it can look like a biblical question. But their starting point did not lie in wanting to believe the Word of God. They first set up the conclusion that there can be no resurrection, and to guard that conclusion they moved the present order unchanged into the world of the resurrection.

Man thinks within the range of what he knows. Watching the order of being born, growing up, marrying, aging, and dying, it is easy to expect that after death everything will be the same as now. If one considers the visible to be everything, the resurrection becomes an impossible word. For he has seen the dead body return to the dust, and he has not seen in daily life a person who entered the grave walk out again. So he thinks he is asking a rational question, but in reality he is measuring the power of God by the size of human experience.

Jesus did not enter into their scenario and rule on which brother was the husband. He set right the very foundation of the question. He said, *"Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God?"* Their misunderstanding had not arisen because one piece of information was lacking. Their attitude toward the Scriptures and their faith regarding the power of God were wrong. They used the letters of Scripture as material for dispute, yet they did

not know the God to whom the Scriptures testify. They spoke of God, yet they did not believe that He is the One who can raise the dead.

The same danger exists for us today. Even if we know Bible verses and have learned the terms of faith, if we accept only the parts that fit our experience, we can stand in the place of the Sadducees. The range we have judged possible becomes larger than the word God has spoken. Instead of making the Word the ground of faith, we make it a tool for protecting a conclusion already drawn. We shut what God can do inside our circumstances, our past, our feelings, and our calculations. Therefore, what we must ask first before this passage is not 'How do the details of the order after the resurrection fit my thinking?' It is 'Do I really believe the God to whom the Scriptures testify as the living Almighty?'

## The resurrection is not an extension of this world but God's new work

Jesus said that when people rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels of heaven. This word does not mean that a resurrected person becomes an angel. Neither does it mean that the relationships of marriage and family that God has now given are worthless. Jesus' answer makes clear the fact that the life of the resurrection cannot be calculated only by present conditions. The resurrection is not simply beginning again the life one lived before death. It is the work by which God overcomes death and causes us to live within a new order.

Hidden in the Sadducees' question is the premise that death is the final power. They thought that death ends every

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relationship and hope, and that even if there were a resurrection, it would only make the present complications greater. But the resurrection God gives does not make the problems of the time before death repeat without end. It is the work of breaking the power of death and causing us to live in perfect life before God. Now our bodies weaken, fall ill, and finally die. Loss comes into relationships, and the day comes when we part from those we love. The hope of the resurrection is not a word telling us to take such pain lightly. It is the declaration that death and loss are not the final judge.

We must not reduce the resurrection to a vague comfort or a hope kept within the heart. Jesus spoke of the actual rising of the dead. God is the Creator, who formed the body, and He has the power to raise the dead again. The resurrection is not an idea people made up by denying death; it is the event of salvation that God promised and Himself accomplishes. That we cannot explain the whole process does not make God's power smaller. As God makes the sprout come out of a seed though we cannot make the life inside it, the sovereignty of life belongs to God from the beginning.

Therefore faith is not the attitude of pretending to know what one does not know. It is accepting clearly as far as God has made known, and not filling with imagination what He has not made known. We must not dress up as fact forms of the resurrection that the text does not state. At the same time, we must not deny even the resurrection God has clearly spoken because we cannot know everything. The Bible is not a book meant to satisfy all human curiosity about the details of the resurrection; it is the Word that calls us to believe God, who overcomes death.

## God does not cancel His covenant in the face of the grave

Jesus went back to the book of Moses, which the Sadducees acknowledged. He pointed to the word God spoke to Moses in the midst of the thornbush. God revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Those forefathers had already departed from the world by the time Moses was called. Yet God did not speak of the relationship He had made with them as a thing of the past. He who had been their God revealed Himself as still their God.

The word *"He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living"* carries the meaning that God's covenant does not become void in the face of death. To man's eyes the grave looks like the end of a relationship. But that God becomes a person's God does not mean that He gives help for a while and then lets him go with death. The living God gives life to His people and holds them to the end. The God who called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not weaker than death.

The scene of the thornbush shows that God's people were not forgotten in their suffering. The people of Israel groaned in long slavery, and looking only at the circumstances before their eyes, God seemed to be far away. But God was not ignorant of their suffering. He did not forget the promise He had established with the forefathers, and He called Moses and began the work of salvation. Even in the unseen time God was alive and was fulfilling His covenant.

For us, too, there are times when God seems to be silent. We pray and circumstances do not change; the weakness of the flesh continues; and on the road of keeping faith we may rather meet hardship. To believe in the God of the living is not to insist that there is no suffering. It is to believe the fact that suffering does

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not prove God's absence, and that even death cannot abolish God's promise. God is not a notion that only watches from afar; He is the living One, who hears the cry of His people and accomplishes His will of salvation.

## Jesus' actual resurrection makes our hope certain

In Mark chapter 12, Jesus had not yet borne the Cross. But soon afterward He carried the sin of the world with the baptism He had received from John, died on the Cross, and actually rose again. Jesus, who taught the Sadducees the resurrection, Himself overcame death. Therefore the Christian's faith in the resurrection does not stand on human conjecture. It is grounded on Jesus Christ, who entered the tomb and rose again.

The parts of Jesus' work of salvation cannot be separated from one another. Jesus, the Son of God, bore all the sins of the world when He received baptism from John the Baptist. And carrying those sins, He went to the Cross and received the judgment of sin and died. That death was not an unexpected defeat that befell the sinless One; it was the death of salvation, by which He paid in full the price of the sins He had borne. Jesus did not stay in death but actually rose again in three days. That resurrection is the confirmation that He overcame sin and death and fully accomplished salvation.

If one knows only the fact that Jesus received baptism and does not believe that his own sins passed on to Him, he is watching the gospel from outside. If one remembers the death of the Cross only as a sad sacrifice and does not believe that it was the judgment of the sins He had borne, he cannot enjoy the assurance of the remission of sin. If one speaks of the resurrection only as a symbol like a new start in spring, he misses

the power of God, who overcame death. We must receive into our hearts the baptism Jesus received from John the Baptist, the death of the Cross, and the actual resurrection as one completed salvation.

All the sins of the person who believes this gospel are removed once and for all. It is not that a person pays for his past sins by living a good life, nor that he maintains salvation by adding his own merits daily. Because Jesus' bearing of the sin of the world and His receiving of its judgment are perfect, the one who believes receives the remission of sin and becomes righteous. The dead soul obtains new life, becomes a child of God, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Jesus' resurrection is the sure ground that the new life given to those who have received the remission of sin is no empty word.

Jesus' resurrection also makes us look toward the future resurrection of our bodies. Now we age and fall ill and cannot avoid death. Receiving the remission of sin does not mean that the flesh immediately changes into a body that does not die. Nor do the illnesses and hardships of reality automatically disappear. But death is not our end. Jesus, who brought us to life, is alive, and He will raise His people again. The resurrection of Christ is not a slogan that guarantees success in this present life but a living hope that continues beyond death.

## The righteous who have received the remission of sin call the living God Father

To have become a living one does not mean that the flesh has become perfect and never does wrong again. Even the person who has received the remission of sin has temptations and weaknesses, and there are times when he actually falls. There

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are also things he must acknowledge and turn from. But that lack cannot cancel the remission of sin Jesus accomplished. The righteous person is righteous not because his conduct is without flaw but because he has received the remission of all his sins by believing the completed salvation of Jesus.

If this distinction is not clear, faith is shaken toward two extremes. On one side, whenever a person sees the lack of his flesh, he thinks he has returned to the status of a sinner. It is because he seeks the ground of salvation not in Jesus' work but in his own condition. On the other side, a person thinks that since he has become righteous, he may treat wrongdoing lightly. But the gospel permits neither. The status of the righteous who have received the remission of sin is firm by grace, but the person who knows that grace does not rationalize his wrongs; he wants to set them right before the living Father.

To be able to call God Father is not merely gaining one religious title. It is the confession of the relationship of having become God's child in Jesus Christ. It is not calling God Father vaguely while sin remains as it is; the person who has received the remission of sin by believing the gospel—that Jesus bore sin, was judged, and removed it—calls God Father by the Holy Spirit. The living God becomes the God of His children, speaks to them and leads them, and does not abandon them even on the road of weakness.

Therefore the identity of the righteous cannot become a ground for pride. It is not a status obtained because I am better than other people. Rather, knowing that we became living ones wholly by the grace of Jesus, we become thankful and humble. And this identity becomes the foundation of faith that stands against despair. Even when circumstances are hard and the heart wavers, we return to the fact: 'I am not a person attached to God by my own merits but a child of God whom Christ has brought to life.'

## The faith of the living walks with the living God

We easily keep God only within our notions. We say we have received salvation, yet before actual hardship we think we must carry everything alone. We pray without the expectation that God hears, and we read the Word without receiving it as the voice that leads us today. Then, while confessing with the lips the God of the living, in our living we come to treat Him as if He were a dead God.

The person who believes in the living God does not guarantee that there will be no suffering. Rather, even in suffering he believes that God is with him. He does not insist only on his own wisdom but lays down his thoughts before the Word. When he needs help he asks God, and even when the answer is slow he does not turn God's goodness into doubt. For he knows that if He is the One who overcomes even death, today's blocked circumstances are not outside His sovereignty.

In the saying that God becomes our God there is a relationship. It means that He is not One far away, unrelated to the saved, but becomes the Father, who teaches us with the Word, is with us by the Holy Spirit, and hears our prayers. We must not judge this relationship by the feelings of each day. It is not that God is near only on days when the heart is fervent and has left on days of discouragement. Our feelings rise and fall, but the remission of sin Jesus accomplished does not change, and neither does the promise of the living God. So faith makes us lean on the Word and call on God even on days when feeling is weak.

Nor must the answer to prayer be understood as a tool for moving God according to my will. The prayer that believes in the God of the living is not a matter of pushing through my demands alone; it is telling the living Father my circumstances

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and entrusting myself to His will. God may at times lead us by a way different from the one we asked. He may make us wait, or, rather than removing the hardship, give us the strength and wisdom to endure within it. What matters is not whether I obtained at once the result I wanted, but the fact that God does not forget His children and leads them within His will of salvation.

Moreover, to walk with the living God is not to be shut up in a conviction all one's own. It leads to a life of counting precious those who have received the remission of sin by believing the same gospel, hearing the Word together, embracing one another's weaknesses, and building up one another's faith. As God revealed Himself as the God of the covenant not to Abraham alone but also to Isaac and Jacob, our faith must not become a private privilege that shuts out other saints. Salvation comes truly to the individual, but the saved person follows the Word together among God's people and serves others.

The person who believes in the God of the living has reason to give thanks. Not because his circumstances are perfect, but because God has become his Father and his Savior. Before, dead under sin, he could not truly call on God; but now, having become a living one through Jesus' salvation, he calls Him Father. When we do not take this privilege for granted, worship becomes not a transaction for getting something but thanksgiving for the life already received. The ordinary days lived in society, at home, and in the church also become places where we walk with the living God.

Faith in the resurrection is not escape from reality. Because we believe that we shall live in the future, it makes us live today truthfully. It makes us not stake everything on what will vanish, and choose what pleases God. It makes us not sit crushed under condemnation because of the failures of the flesh, but rise again

through the gospel. Even in the sorrow of sending a loved one ahead of us, we may weep, but it keeps us from saying, like people without hope, that this is the end. For God is the God of the living.

This hope is not a courage that takes the fear of death lightly; it is the faith that entrusts oneself to the Lord, who is greater than death. We grieve over death and shed tears before parting, but we do not accept that the grave is God's last word. Because Jesus actually rose again and promised the resurrection to us also, the last word belongs not to death but to life.

The Sadducees denied the resurrection by enlarging the present order. Jesus broke their closed calculation with the Scriptures and the power of God. Now we, too, must decide by what standard we will live. Will you take the visible circumstances as the final fact, or will you take as the final fact the word of God, who raises the dead? Jesus, who brought us to life from sin, is alive even now. He accomplished salvation with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and He has removed once and for all all the sins of those who believe, making them righteous and children of God.

Therefore do not shut God inside your own calculations. Do not doubt the completed remission of sin because of the weakness of your flesh. Do not think that the promise has ended in the face of death. Believe the actual resurrection of Jesus, to which the Scriptures testify, and look toward the new life given to those who have received the remission of sin and the future resurrection of the body. And today call on the living Father and walk with Him. God is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

# Love for God does not devour one's neighbor

**< Mark 12:28-40 >**

**"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.' So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' Now when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' But after that no one dared question Him. Then Jesus answered and said, while He taught in the temple, 'How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the Son of David? For David himself said by the Holy Spirit: 'The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'' Therefore David himself calls Him 'Lord'; how is He then his Son?' And the common people heard Him**

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**gladly. Then He said to them in His teaching, 'Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.'"**

## At the place where the great commandment is asked, our life is laid bare

In Mark chapter 12, questions follow one after another. Some questions were meant to ensnare Jesus, and some were meant to deny the resurrection. But one scribe, knowing that Jesus had answered well, came and asked which is the first of all the commandments. He wanted to know what is central among the countless commands. Jesus spoke of love for God and love for one's neighbor. He did not choose one and throw away the other. He bound together, as the greatest commandments, loving God with one's whole person and loving one's neighbor as one's own body.

We often make faith complicated. It is easy to regard conspicuous ceremonies, service that people recognize, much knowledge, and long prayers as the center of faith. But Jesus takes us to love toward God and toward people. He does not ask only what we have done and how much; He makes us see whether within those acts there are truthfulness toward God and love toward our neighbor. One cannot say he loves God while using people, and one cannot say he loves his neighbor while leaving God.

Jesus first tells us to hear that God is the only Lord. Love does not begin with making and serving a god I want. It begins

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with hearing from the Word who God is. To give the only Lord all one's heart, life, mind, and strength is not to entrust to God only a part of life. It is acknowledging that God is the Master of our thoughts and choices, our time and strength, our relationships and hopes. If we seek God only in the hour of worship, while in the remaining areas our own desires are master, it cannot be called love with all the heart.

Yet love for God does not stay only as an invisible feeling within the heart. It shows its form in the way we treat the neighbor right beside us. As one feeds his own body when it is hungry, cares for it when it is sick, and protects it when it is in danger, so it is not passing by one's neighbor's circumstances with indifference. Love for one's neighbor is not unconditionally granting every demand or approving even wrongs as right. It is not making a person a means for my own purposes, but treating him as a precious life standing before God.

## When the first and the second are torn apart, hypocrisy grows

In Jesus' answer, the first and the second have an order but are not separated. The person who loves God cannot treat carelessly the neighbor God loves. Neither does he throw away God's truth in the name of loving his neighbor. Love for God becomes the root of love for one's neighbor, and love for one's neighbor becomes the fruit that love for God bears in life.

But a religious person easily tears these two apart. He can keep with devotion the ceremonies offered to God while treating his family roughly at home. He can speak godly words in public places while closing his eyes to the needs of the weak. He can despise people in the name of keeping the truth, or leave wrongs

alone with the word love. Either way, it is the result of man conveniently dividing the commandments Jesus bound into one.

The scribe answered that loving God and loving one's neighbor is better than all the whole burnt offerings and other sacrifices. He was not denying the place of sacrifice. He recognized the fact that even a sacrifice God commanded loses its meaning if it is performed as an empty shell without love and obedience. Even if the form of worship is rightly furnished, if one tramples his neighbor after worship, he cannot say he has pleased God. However loud the praise of the lips, if one deceives another person for his own profit, that praise and that life collide with each other.

Our worship must be connected with life. If we have heard the Word, we must not use it only for judging people but first hold it up to our own attitude. If we have prayed, we must not end with the demand that our own will be done but ask for strength to obey God's will. If we have received grace, we must not lord it over the weak but find the reason to serve. When love for God leads on to love for neighbor, worship continues in the life of the week as well.

## To be near the kingdom of God is not to have entered it

Hearing the scribe's answer, Jesus said that he was not far from the kingdom of God. In this word there is recognition and at the same time a solemn invitation. He had understood the center of the commandments wisely. He also knew that love for God and for neighbor matters more than the quantity of offerings. But 'not far' is not yet the same as 'entered.' Being able to explain the truth accurately and being saved by that truth are

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distinguished.

A person with much Bible knowledge easily thinks that he is already inside the kingdom of God. If he can speak the right answers and pick out other people's errors, he considers his faith right as well. But the Word of God is not something stored only in the head, like the answers to a test. The Word exposes my sin and my inability, and makes me come with my heart to the Lord, who saves me. The fact that one knows the commandments well does not mean that he has kept the commandments completely.

If anyone had loved God with all his heart, all his soul, all his mind, and all his strength, who could put forward his own righteousness before God? If anyone had always loved his neighbor as his own body, who could stand without shame? We loved selectively, were kinder to the people profitable to us, and tried to show a loving appearance where our honor was at stake. We depended on other things more than on God and put our desires before God's will. The great commandment does not only give us an excellent goal of life; it exposes that we are sinners who cannot call ourselves righteous.

Therefore what we must do on hearing the commandment is not the resolution to practice love more and so build up the qualification to be saved. Such a resolution soon makes us count our own achievements and compare ourselves with others. Before the commandment we must acknowledge that our love falls short, and believe in the Christ, who came to save us from sin. The kingdom of God is not a place entered by standing near the threshold of knowledge. One must receive with the heart the salvation that Jesus Christ the King has accomplished.

## The Christ is the Lord, greater than a respected teacher

Jesus went on to ask about the Christ. The scribes taught that the Christ is the Son of David. That was not a wrong statement, but neither was it a sufficient one. David, moved by the Holy Spirit, called the Christ his own Lord. The Christ is the One who comes in David's line and at the same time the One whom David calls Lord. Jesus is not merely one teacher who expounds the commandment of love well. He is the Lord whom all people must believe and worship.

The scribe acknowledged that Jesus' answer was right. But acknowledging right teaching alone is not enough. One must know who Jesus is and humble his heart before Him. If I keep standing in the place of evaluating Jesus' words, I may praise those words, but I do not obey the Lord. Faith is not choosing what pleases me among Jesus' teachings but believing Jesus Himself as Lord.

The Lord, greater than David, came in the body of a man to save us. By receiving baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus bore the sin of the whole world. Our lack of love, our self-centeredness, our hypocrisy, and our greed all passed on to Him. Jesus carried the sins He had borne, received the judgment of sin on the Cross, and died, and in three days He rose from the dead. The sinless Lord accomplished the work of salvation for us from beginning to end.

The person who believes this fact does not enter the kingdom of God by the score of his own deeds. By believing with the heart the salvation Jesus has already accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. On the person who has received the remission of sin the Holy Spirit comes, and he becomes a born-

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again child of God. How well one has kept the commandment of love is not the price of the remission of sin; Jesus' perfect work is the ground of salvation. So the saved person does not boast of his own love but boasts of the love of the Lord, who brought him to life.

## We must beware of the desire hidden behind long robes and best seats

Jesus told the people to beware of the scribes. For they went around in long robes, loved to receive greetings in the marketplaces, and wanted the best seats in the synagogues and the best places at feasts. It does not mean that there is sin in a long robe, or a greeting, or a seat in itself. The problem is the desire to be exalted by people through them. They used the form of godliness not as love toward God but as a means of exalting their own names.

Hypocrisy is a state in which the outside and the inside differ. With the mouth one exalts God, but at the actual center is the desire to be exalted oneself. Prayer is the way of coming to God, yet it becomes a performance that gives people the impression of godliness. The office entrusted with the Word is received in order to serve people, yet it becomes a seat that demands respect and privilege. The larger the religious exterior grows, the harder it can be to discover the self-love inside it.

Today we, too, can have the heart of the long robe and the best seat. We feel hurt if our name is not called, and lose the desire to serve if what we did is not made known. We compare ourselves with the places others hold, and try to confirm the worth of our faith by people's reactions. The godly words shown online and the attitude with which we treat the people actually

near us can also differ. We must not direct Jesus' warning only at the religious leaders of a particular age, but receive it as a mirror that reflects our own heart's desire to be recognized.

Love for God is not measured by people's applause. God looks at the center. He knows the love practiced truthfully even when no one recognizes it. He looks not at whether we sat in a high seat but at whom we served in that seat. He looks not at how long we spoke but at whether that prayer was directed toward God. Therefore what we must lay down is not every outward form, but the desire to adorn ourselves with outward form. We must watch our hearts so that office, knowledge, prayer, and service do not become tools of self-display.

## The prayer that devours the possessions of widows denies the commandment of love

Jesus' rebuke of the scribes does not stop at mere vanity. They devoured the possessions of widows while making long prayers in hypocrisy. At that time a widow was a neighbor in need of economic and social protection. A person who knew the Word well ought to have cared for the weak. But behind their godly appearance they intruded on the lives of the people they should have protected. Religious acts said to love God existed together with the greed that harmed their neighbor.

Here the substance of the hypocrisy that has separated love for God from love for neighbor is laid bare. The person who offers long prayers while devouring the possessions of widows has not kept the first commandment. For God, the object of his prayer, has commanded love for one's neighbor. One cannot say that he is loyal to God while sacrificing the weak to guard his own position and profit. Jesus warned that such hypocrisy

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receives a heavier condemnation.

This word must be heard all the more solemnly within the church. One must not lay unreasonable burdens on the weak in the name of faith, or use a leader's authority to control at will another person's property and choices. Offerings and service must not be pressed as if they were conditions of salvation. Nor is it the meaning of this passage to condemn a person as having no faith unless he hands over everything he has to someone in need. What is given to God must be the fruit that comes willingly from a heart that has received grace, not compulsion and exploitation.

The same principle applies at home and at work. We must not be kind outside while taking the labor of our family for granted. If one takes unjust profit in a transaction by using the other party's lack of information, using part of it afterward for a good work does not turn greed into love. One must not press down his colleagues on the ground of doing much church service, or use Bible knowledge to block the words of a wounded person. Godliness toward God must appear as honesty toward, and protection of, the weak neighbor.

Especially the person who teaches the Word or is entrusted with finances and decisions must watch whom his authority gives life to and on whom it lays burdens. Knowing more is not a ground for demanding greater privilege but a responsibility to serve more carefully. If one uses the fact that the weak find it hard to object, blocks questions with religious words, and makes personal pain invisible by putting forward the needs of the community, he can repeat the wrongs of the scribes. The commandment of love does not say to remove authority, but it demands that all authority be used for the good of one's neighbor.

The widow's two mites, which appear after this passage, cannot be used as a norm forcing the poor to give their whole

livelihood. Rather, Jesus first warned the leaders who devour the possessions of widows. We must not use the devotion of the weak to maintain a system; we must see the circumstances that person carries and protect him. Love does not take away a neighbor's last portion to prove one's own godliness.

## The grace received bears the fruit of love

Then are love and good deeds unimportant? Not so. Love is the greatest commandment and a fruit that must be counted precious in the believer's life. Only, the order must not be reversed. It is not that we love God perfectly and love our neighbor without flaw and so obtain salvation. We first receive the remission of sin by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished, and within that grace we learn the life of loving God and our neighbor.

When the condition of salvation and the fruit of faith are confused, two wrongs arise. If love is made the condition of salvation, a person counts the quantity of his deeds and grows anxious. He judges those who serve less than himself, and every time he fails he thinks his salvation has been canceled. Conversely, if the word that works are not the condition of salvation is used as an excuse for not loving, the fruit of living faith is wiped away. The gospel is neither the way of being saved by works nor the way of saying that since we are saved, it is all right to harm our neighbor.

In the person who has received the remission of sin the Holy Spirit dwells. The Holy Spirit makes us know the grace God has given, sheds light on our self-centered hearts, and leads us to love our neighbor. The fruit may not all appear at once in the same size. There are times we fail because of weakness. But the

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believer does not rationalize failure; he returns to the gospel. Thankful for the remission of sin already received, he acknowledges his wrong, apologizes to the neighbor he has harmed, takes what responsibility he can, and chooses love again.

Service, offerings, obedience, and sacrifice are not paying God the price of salvation. They are giving my life in thanksgiving for the salvation Jesus has already given without price. We serve not to be praised by people but because the Lord loved us. We do not use the weak to establish our own righteousness; with the grace we have received we protect them. We do not love in order to obtain a higher place; because we have already become God's children, we love with joy even in a low place.

## From the place not far off, we must come to the Lord

The scribe knew the right answer and came as far as a place not far from the kingdom of God. But the passage calls us not to stay in the nearness of knowledge. We must believe Jesus as the Lord, greater than David, and receive into our hearts the remission of sin He accomplished with His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. We must lay down the merit of having kept the commandment of love and depend only on the Lord's salvation. Then the Holy Spirit dwells in us and makes us walk the commandment of love not as the burden of salvation but as the way of God's children.

Let us examine whether in our faith there are the heart that wants the best seat and the attitude that devours the possessions of widows. Let us look back to see whether long prayers and godly words are covering indifference toward those near us. Let

us ask whether we are trying to defeat others with knowledge while not kneeling before the Lord Himself. Love for God is not religious success that climbs up treading on people. Love for neighbor is not vague kindness that has thrown away the truth. It is the life that loves the only God and, within His Word, counts one's neighbor as precious as one's own body.

This love does not spring up perfectly from within ourselves. We must first look to Jesus, who loved us, bore our sins, was judged, and rose again. The person who believes that grace and has received the remission of all his sins no longer tries to buy his salvation with love. Instead, with the life he has already received, he bears the fruit of love. He seeks God's joy more than people's recognition, looks for a place to serve rather than a high place, and does not devour but protects what belongs to the weak.

Do not sacrifice your neighbor while saying that you love God. Do not boast of practicing love while making that practice the ground of your salvation. Do not stay merely near the right answer; believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. And let the grace you have received appear as true love in your home, your church, and your workplace. Love for God does not devour one's neighbor. The love received from God is revealed in fruit that gives life to one's neighbor and builds him up. ✉

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## ◇ About the Next Series

The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

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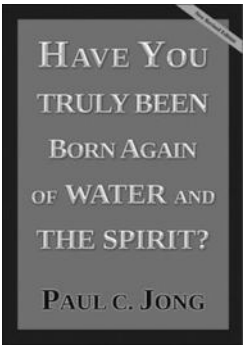
News about newly released books, as well as various ways to access them—including eBooks (PDF, EPUB), audiobooks (M4A, MP3), and online reading—can be found at **www.bjnewlife.org.**

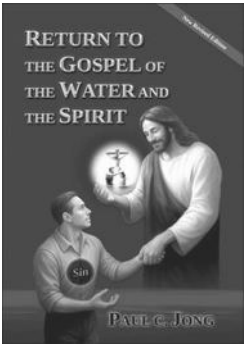
## *Paul C. Jong's Sermons*

**HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]**




Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

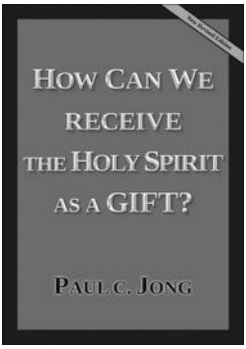
**RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]**




Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

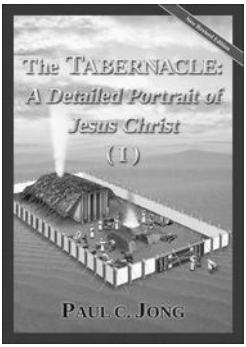
## HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]




In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

## The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]




How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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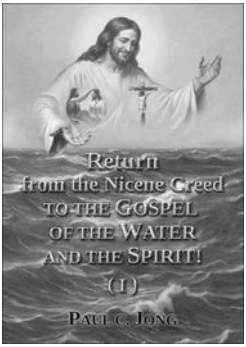
## Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)




-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

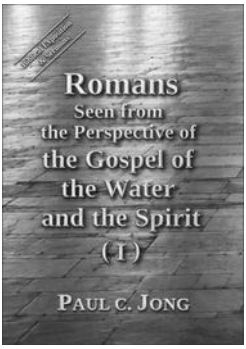
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

## *Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons*

### Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)




When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

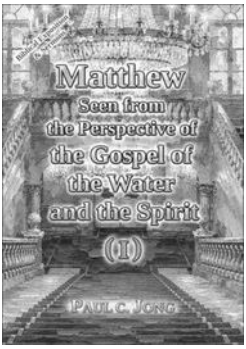
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

### Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



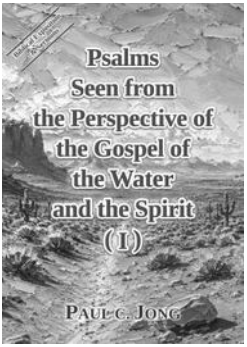

Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

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

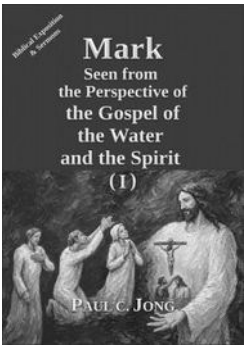



For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a biblical exposition that unfolds the Psalms from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. David's songs are not an outpouring of emotion but the confession of a righteous man who has received the remission of sins, a prophetic praise that looked up to the Christ who is to come. The blessing, righteousness, and peace of the Psalms do not come from human goodness but from the salvation God accomplished in Christ.

Beneath it all flows a single gospel. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to make us righteous. When you open the Psalms with this gospel, the old songs come alive as your own confession, and this book leads you to the blessed place of those clothed in the righteousness of God.

## Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



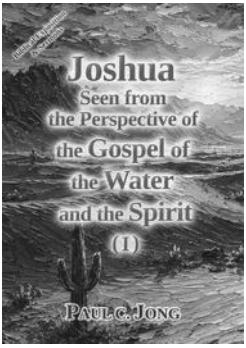

Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

**Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)**

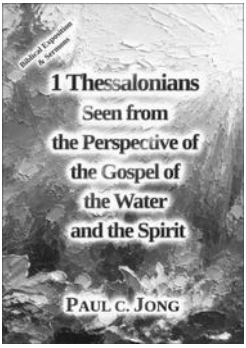



The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

**1 Thessalonians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit**



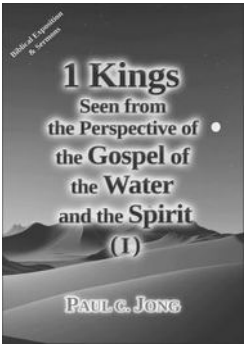

The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered in word only, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which came in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.

This book opens the five chapters of First Thessalonians anew with that very gospel. It is the gospel by which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and bore the sin of the world, was judged in our place for that sin on the cross, and rose again from death, delivering us from sin and death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the power of God that turns a sinner into a righteous one, and turns the fear of death into living hope.

If you desire a faith unshaken in the last days, open this book. Here is the sure word by which you receive the remission of sins—life and true comfort for you.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

## 1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

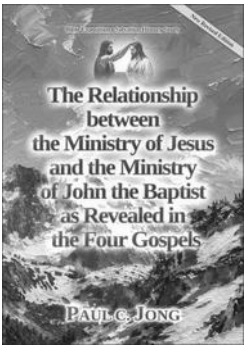



Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

## The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels




The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

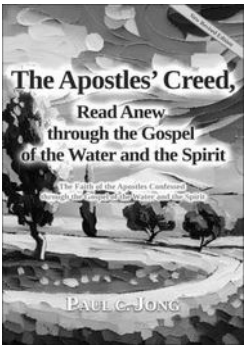
This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

Scan the QR code to view the book's details!

## *Paul C. Jong's Special Features*

### The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

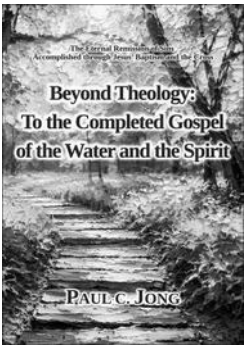



As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

### Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit




Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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# Pastor PAUL C. JONG

**Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.**

**Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.**

**For the past 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing. The compilation of these manuscripts has given rise to today's 'Biblical Exposition Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit.'**

**His works, comprising an ongoing 100-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.

# Mark Chapters 9–12, Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

Though we say that we believe in Jesus, this book leads us to look back and ask what we have truly made our master.

Jesus rebuked fruitless faith through the fig tree that bore nothing but leaves and through the temple that had become a marketplace. The wicked vinedressers regarded the vineyard entrusted to them as their own and even killed the owner's son, and the scribes made a show of piety while taking advantage of the weak. In contrast, through the poor widow who offered two mites—all that she had—God showed that He looks not at the amount given, but at the faith and the heart of the one who gives.

The Lord came not to be served but to serve, and He laid down His own life to save all mankind from sin. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He bore all the sins of mankind; on the Cross He was judged for those sins; and by rising from the dead, He completed the salvation from sin that no human power could ever achieve. The risen Jesus becomes the God of those who have received the remission of sins, and He guarantees resurrection and eternal life beyond death.

Salvation is not obtained by human works, but received by believing in the Lord's work of salvation. Those who have been saved know themselves to be stewards rather than owners; they preach the gospel God has entrusted to them, serve souls, and bear the fruit of love.

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