

We Have Been Saved in Order to Wait¹

December 17th, 2013, Kichijouji Bible Study
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1 Corinthians 16

21 I, Paul, am writing this greeting with my own hand.

22 If anyone doesn't love the Lord, let him be condemned! May our Lord come!

[International Standard Version]

I think that these two verses we just read are extremely important. Paul could not write this epistle to Corinthians by himself. This letter was dictated except these two lines that concluded the letter, which Paul managed to handwrite by himself. As he had very poor eyesight, Paul must have written these lines in large letters. He added at the end what he desperately wanted to tell them. He loved Jesus with all his heart. And Paul desperately wanted the brothers and sisters in Corinth to love Jesus as much as he did. This was his heartfelt desire.

Paul had one wish burning in his heart. He longed for Jesus to come back to this world. And Paul wanted believers in Corinth to have the same desire igniting their hearts as well. The word 'Maranatha' is interpreted as "Come, Lord!"

Revelation

22:20 "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

Paul also wrote to the brothers and sisters living in Philippi from the jail in Rome;

Philippians

4:5 The Lord is near.

The idea of Jesus' coming back must be just fearsome and awful for non-believers, but it brings supreme joy to believers. There is no hope or strength within the hearts of those who have not experienced Jesus. Paul once wrote to the people in Ephesus;

Ephesians

2:12 At that time you were without the Messiah. You had no hope and were in the world without God.

And it was written in his first epistle to Thessalonians, Chapter 4;

1 Thessalonians

4:13 ...so that you may not grieve like other people who have no hope.

Those who don't believe in Jesus have little knowledge or certainty about the incident to come, and they are filled with a vague sense of unease.

Believers of Jesus will confess this way; "Our strength is in the belief that Jesus will come back again and we are convinced that true justice and peace will be brought into this world on that day." For those who refuse to believe in Jesus, the Second Coming must be an unpleasant idea because it will be the day of their judgement. Let me read some other verses;

Jude

14 Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied about these people when he said, "Look! The Lord has come with countless thousands of his holy ones.

15 He will judge all people and convict everyone of all the ungodly things that they have done in such an ungodly way, including all the harsh things that these ungodly sinners have said about him."

As we can see here, Enoch prophesied how people will be convicted in the future. Needless to say, not only Enoch, but Jesus too mentioned the judgement day;

Matthew 25

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Get away from me, you who are accursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels!

46 These people will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.

In addition to Enoch and Jesus, Paul too warned about the punishment;

2 Thessalonians 1

6 Certainly it is right for God to pay back those who afflict you with affliction

7 and to give us who are afflicted relief when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels

8 in blazing fire. He will take revenge on those who do not know God and on those who refuse to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

9 Such people will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction by being separated from the Lord's presence and from his glorious power.

1 『待つために救われた』、2013年12月17日、吉祥寺学び会、ゴットホルド・ベック

Unless the problems of your sins and debts are solved, you will undoubtedly be convicted. The worst sin amongst all is disbelief in Jesus. Men are destined to perish because of this sin. It is not enough to merely believe what is written in the Bible, but we should rather be led by Jesus and ask Him to govern our life. True believers will have no fear on the coming day of judgement. On the contrary, they will face that day filled with joy.

Without Jesus, we have to wait for the day of judgement in fear and trembling. As is written in 3:18, "Whoever believes in God's unique Son is not condemned." This is exactly what the gospel is, isn't it? "Maranatha. Come, Lord!" Three things are true regarding those who have this desire.

Firstly, they are filled with joy. Secondly, they remain alert and pray and thirdly, they keep themselves pure and clean.

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Let's think about these three points quickly.

2 Corinthians

3:12 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we speak very boldly,

Believers in Jesus will not be overwhelmed by anxiety or worries. Those who long for Jesus are liberated in the true sense in that they are not affected by what others say. If we are consumed by this hope, we will be filled with joy and will boldly testify for Jesus. Because when our hearts are filled with hope, it will flow out of our mouth as words. We can see it in chapter 12 of Matthew. Let's look at some words Jesus said to the Bible Scholars of those times;

Matthew 12

34 You children of serpents! How can you say anything good when you are evil? The mouth speaks about what overflows from the heart.

35 A good person brings good things out of a good treasure house, and an evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure house.

In addition, those who wait for Jesus always remain alert and keep praying. The Bible lists seven characteristics of the people of prayer.

Firstly, they stay alert. Secondly, they are the ones who wait eagerly and thirdly, they keep themselves tidy and clean.

These things are summarized in verses 6 and 8, Chapter 5 of the First Thessalonians;

1 Thessalonians

6 Therefore, let's not fall asleep like others do, but let's stay awake and be sober.

8 But since we belong to the day, let's be sober. We must put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Fourthly, people of prayer are prepared to endure persecution for the Lord. Fifthly, they are willing to testify for the Lord to others. It is as written in the Bible;

2 Timothy 2

5 But you must be clear-headed about everything. Endure suffering. Do the work of an evangelist. Devote yourself completely to your ministry.

Sixthly, people of prayer await blessings. Such people are aware of their own instability and thus entirely rely on Jesus. It is commanded in the Bible;

1 Peter

1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep a clear head, and set your hope completely on the grace to be given you when Jesus, the Messiah, is revealed.

Seventhly, people of prayer have strong intentions to fight against the devil. Peter wrote to believers of his time.

1 Peter

8 Be clear-minded and alert. Your opponent, the devil, is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

9 Resist him and be firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

Those who wait for Jesus, as I just mentioned, are filled with joy. Secondly, they stay alert and pray, and thirdly, they keep themselves pure and clean. I would like to read these famous verses again;

1 John 3

2 Dear friends, we are now God's children, but what we will be like has not been revealed yet. We know that when the Messiah is revealed, we will be like him, because we will see him as he is.

3 And everyone who has this hope based on him keeps himself pure, just as the Messiah is pure.

Those who wait for Jesus live with the anticipation that Jesus may arrive today. Such people will never be

captivated by their own pursuits; instead their attention will always be turned toward “the one who is to come.” Those who wait for Jesus cleanse themselves every single day by the blood and the words of Jesus. Paul wrote to the people in Corinth;

2 Corinthians

7:1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let's cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit by becoming mature in our holy fear of God.

1 Thessalonians

5:23 May the God of peace himself make you holy in every way. And may your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—remain blameless when our Lord Jesus, the Messiah, appears.

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Here, I would like to summarize what I have been discussing so far. If we don't have intimate personal communication with Jesus and absolute love for Him, we would never have true hope or joy, we wouldn't be able to testify for the Lord, we would never have freedom or sincere prayer and thus, we would neither purify ourselves nor be transformed into the blessed ones. The earnest wish of those who love Jesus is for Him to come soon.

“Maranatha. Lord Jesus, please come.” However, there are some important things to keep in mind until the day Jesus returns. Above all, we should keep walking in awe of Jesus. There is nothing we can hide from the eyes of Jesus. We should rather walk in the light of Jesus. We should have nothing hidden from each other.

We ought to read the Bible together and pray together. We should always remember the presence of Jesus. When we do, the Lord will never fail to give us all the blessings, support and protection we need. In addition, we should always keep in mind that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, shouldn't we? The Holy Spirit wants to use us as his vessels. All kinds of sin will keep us away from the Lord and isolate us from Him.

Consequently, it will bring us to desolation and eventually draw us away from all joy and peace. We have to bear clearly in mind that our body does not belong to ourselves, but is the temple of the Holy Spirit. This also holds the secret of receiving the blessings, support and protection of the Lord.

And thirdly, we ought to live our everyday life as witnesses of the Lord. The Lord will not be pleased if someone locks himself away refusing to communicate

with other brothers and sisters. All things we do in our life should be testimonies of the Lord. Paul wrote to his beloved disciple, Timothy;

1 Timothy

4:12 Do not let anyone look down on you because you are young, but be an example for other believers in your speech, behavior, love, faithfulness, and purity.

The famous Professor von Weizsäcker in Germany, who was a relative of the prime minister, once asked a question to his students. “What is it that is absolutely certain? Please tell me what you think.” The students spoke about many different ideas that came to their minds, but remained divided and could not reach a consensus. After a while, one student dared to ask the professor. “So, what do you think is absolutely certain, Sir?” Then the professor answered, “That Jesus Christ will be coming back.”

It is the only factor that is certain. It is the conviction that Jesus will come back in a short while that gives us light, joy, hope and strength. Paul wrote a letter to the brothers and sisters living in Thessaloniki, in which he emphasized that they had been saved in order to wait for Jesus. Now, what about us? Are we waiting sincerely for Jesus to return? Why it is so important to live eagerly waiting for Jesus' return? I can think of four reasons.

Firstly, a life that looks forward to the return of Jesus is truly meaningful. Contrarily, the life with no expectation of Jesus' coming is meaningless and empty. Why do we get caught up in worldly matters? Many people make this mistake and then begin to realize its futility and wastage of time.

If we lose hope and stop waiting, our life will be so boring and miserable. When all anticipation and expectations are lost, it will make people apathetic toward everything. They will become lethargic, aimless and stand by, achieving nothing. They may even take their own life just like Yukio Mishima did several decades ago. However, we are waiting for Jesus to come. Jesus will absolutely return.

Secondly, a life of waiting makes people stay alert. Expectations keep people awake. Among other reasons, our eyes have to be opened for the eternal life prepared for us. Sleeping ones cannot even hear. Those who are looking forward to seeing Jesus will never be blind to what they truly are. Those who wait for Jesus keep themselves mindful so as not to grieve Him. Contrarily, those who do not wait for Jesus are blind and deaf to the voice of the Lord.

Thirdly, the life of waiting is a life of responsibility. Each one of us is responsible for the life of someone else. In addition, the life of waiting for Jesus' return should not be passive, but has to be positive and active. Those who long for Jesus take advantage of every chance and never miss any opportunities.

Furthermore, all those who wait eagerly don't care about themselves, but place Jesus at the forefront of their lives. Brothers and sisters who lead a life of waiting for His second coming are always conscious of the eyes of Jesus watching them. All those who long for Jesus love Him. If you do not care about Jesus or aspire for the return of the Lord every single day, your love for Jesus is untrue. Such people lead a self-centered life.

Fourthly, the life of waiting is a life of joy. The Lord may reveal Himself today to the brothers and sisters who have been truly waiting for His return. Lively faith and eagerness to wait change their lives fundamentally. All worries, sufferings and distress will melt away when they think of the return of Jesus. And what it takes to lead a life of anticipation and joy is nothing but the assurance that all our faults and sins have been forgiven. Even if you do not have this conviction now, you can obtain it if you sincerely ask. Today, in this world filled with dreadful confusion and turbulence, desperation and darkness, it is only the truth of the Advent of Christ that provides us with true joy and peace.

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