

The Lord is Mine

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私のものである主
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Acts of Apostles

16:19 When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities in the public square.

16:20 They brought them before the magistrates and said, "These men are stirring up a lot of trouble in our city. They are Jews

16:21 and are advocating customs that we are not allowed to accept or practice as Romans."

16:22 The crowd joined in the attack against them. Then the magistrates had Paul and Silas stripped of their clothes and ordered them beaten with rods.

16:23 After giving them a severe beating, they threw them in jail and ordered the jailer to keep them under tight security.

16:24 Having received these orders, he put them into the inner cell and fastened their feet in leg irons.

16:25 Around midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

16:26 Suddenly, there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken. All the doors immediately flew open, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

16:27 When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped.

16:28 But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Don't hurt yourself, because we are all here!"

16:29 The jailer asked for torches and rushed inside. Trembling as he knelt in front of Paul and Silas,

16:30 he took them outside and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

16:31 They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved."

16:32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and everyone in his home.

16:33 At that hour of the night, he took them and washed their wounds. Then he and his entire family were baptized immediately.

16:34 He brought Paul and Silas upstairs into his house and set food before them. He was thrilled, as was his household, to believe in God.

[International Standard Version]

Last weekend, I traveled to the city of Morioka. It was not for my own pleasure. Today in this meeting, I see brother and sister Katagiri from Morioka in the audience. It is so nice to see them again. What did they come here for? It is definitely not to kill some time. It was not because they had no job to do today. They came here in order to share praise for the Lord with everybody.

David experienced many things and he came to believe that solitary prayer was not what the Lord wanted. That was why he often used the expression 'together' in the Psalms. It is mostly important to look up to the Lord together with other people, to praise his name all together, isn't it? When people see others praising the Lord, they would be compelled to do the same.

I always remember the testimony of a sister from Okinawa. She went through many ordeals and passed away at 94. Although I still can't explain how, but all who came to know her were eventually blessed. They completely lost the desire to place themselves at the center. Let me read from her testimony.

I praise the name of our Lord. I am still in good shape. But, I know the time is near for me to be called to heaven. So, I decided to leave my last words for you. My feeling now is exactly as in the Psalm 23, which is "Even when I walk through a valley of deep darkness, I will not be afraid because you are with me." How graceful these words are, "My cup is full. I am so grateful to Jesus who has guided me to this place, where I can express my feelings with these words.

How wonderful is life always with Jesus! I am filled with joy, peace and hope and I have nothing to worry about at all. I am free from all agony. I am happy about going to heaven. I will live in the house of the Lord forever. I am grateful to the Lord Jesus from the bottom of my heart.

It is more stunning than any scientific papers, isn't it? After all, she was convinced that the Lord is infinitely graceful, that he would never forsake anyone, no matter how miserable they were. This was true even for someone like herself who did not qualify to enter heaven but deserved to be abandoned. Unlike this society we are living in today, Jesus would never forsake anyone. Each human being was redeemed by the blood Jesus shed. Each one of us is precious to Jesus.

We cannot understand the reason. This world we are living in today is like one big hospital. All men are

agonized and heavily burdened. They have lost all hopes and are in the depths of despair. They don't know what to do. This is how people are today. Consequently, all people are alone just like stray sheep.

How can stray sheep be relieved? Needless to say, they need to come back and stay by the shepherd. 3000 years ago, King David, who ruled the world of his time said, "The Lord is the one who is shepherding me; I lack nothing." Those who have this feeling can rejoice even in the worst agony and pain.

David knew that he was nothing but a helpless, stupid and weak sheep that definitely needs the Lord, the shepherd. Those who know their helplessness come to the good shepherd and cast everything to him. This is the only way to be saved. The Lord Jesus, who is the good Shepherd, poured himself out into the emptiness thoroughly. The only thing he cares about is blessings for each one of us, his poor and miserable sheep. This truly wonderful promise, which was written 2500 years ago, can be found in these verses, which are quoted very often.

Ezekiel

34:15 I will feed my sheep and give them rest,' declares the Lord God.

34:16 'I'm going to seek both the lost as well as the scattered, and bring them both back so their broken bones can be set and the sick can be healed.

This is not just what the Lord felt in ancient times; he is still filled with the same compassion today. The Bible describes in this verse how we used to be, which is not very pleasant to read; "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, each of us, to his own way." However, it also describes, in the later part, the arrival of joy. It occurred when the Father God laid all our punishments on the Lord Jesus, who was crucified. One of Jesus' disciples, Peter once confessed;

1 Peter

2:25 You were "like sheep that kept going astray," but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

The Lord Jesus was a good shepherd who gave up his own life for us. Furthermore, although we cannot see him today, he is still standing by each one of us, he still lives for us. In fact, he cares and is concerned about each one of us. We are allowed to come to the Lord as we are, exactly the way we are now.

Jesus is waiting for us and would never refuse anyone. Jesus forgives us, liberates us and truly makes us new.

Here is one of the most wonderful promises in the Bible; "See, I am making all things new!" Although it is beyond our imagination and comprehension, the one who gave us this promise is the one who never fails to keep his promise. Jesus, who desires to give us the only true salvation, which is the forgiveness of our sins, peace with the Lord God and the eternal life, is alive.

Needless to say, he has nothing to do with any man-made religion. True God has no religion and he has no relation to any religion at all. Thus, the word 'religion' is not used in the Bible, which consists of the words of God.

Actually, this word appears once in the version we use, but it is a misinterpretation. In the original language, the word 'worship' is used instead of 'religion'. It is not a trivial mistake but an unacceptable mistranslation. Our Bible has nothing to do with any man-made religion. It consists of the words of God, who has no beginning, no end. As Jesus explained in this verse, "Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear."

The worst and most stupid thing to do in this world is to refuse to rely on these everlasting words and instead act based on our own judgment. Man-made religion misleads people, gives us false relief and deludes us in order to collect our money. It is nothing but a business.

People who gathered here today from everywhere are not religious workers, but those who have discovered everlasting joy by knowing Jesus. Without the everlasting joy, our life will be so unattractive, filled with burdens and boredom. As I just mentioned, Jesus has nothing to do with any religion. He does not believe in any religion.

This man does not demand anything from you. He does not urge you to obtain knowledge or to establish yourself; neither does he ask for your money. The calling of the Lord, which is "I love you", appears for an uncountable number of times throughout the Bible. There is no one in this world who is ignored by Jesus. When Jesus died the vicarious death on the cross, he sacrificed himself for us to redeem our selfishness. Jesus himself exactly is the love of our Father God, which is manifested to us.

All things were created by the Lord God and this magnificent Lord still cares about everything he has created. Furthermore, this Lord is concerned about each one of you who is gathered here today. It is beyond our imagination, isn't it?

You too are loved by this Lord deep in his heart. You have no need to give up hope even in the deepest agony. You have a chance to be released from isolation. There is always a possibility for you to be released from all burdens. You are even offered liberation from all debts. The Lord is sincerely waiting to forgive all your sins, mistakes and selfishness.

The meeting this morning too is held for the sole purpose of introducing Jesus, who was promised thousands of years ago, came down to this earth as prophesied, took the punishment on the cross which should have been inflicted on us, resurrected in order to indicate the way of salvation, went back to heaven and will come back again.

What is it that is most important for us? It is not to stay physically healthy or to have a lot of money. It is neither to get many friends nor to have power and honor. The important thing is to have the conviction that we will be liberated from our burden of debts, that the savior God has already forgiven our arrogance, and that he has granted us the eternal life.

There has been absolutely nobody in this world who has accepted Jesus and regretted it later. Jesus is the one who gives us infinitely abundant blessings. The true salvation leads us to liberation from all kinds of worries, fear and agonies.

To be saved is to experience the love of the Lord God. Belonging to a man-made religion or worshiping man-made gods will never let us experience true love or let us receive any kind of real salvation.

Wounded hearts ought to be liberated and healed. Hardened hearts need to be softened by the love of the Lord and renewed. Unfulfilled hearts have to be filled by Jesus, who came down to this world. For each one of you, my dearest attendees, may this meeting be a chance for you to be changed by knowing Jesus so that you may rejoice in agony, be filled with peace even when you are in deep trouble and move forward with lively hopes for the future.

The verses we read at the beginning revolve around the earthquake that occurred 2000 years ago. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake as written in the verse 26, which eventually caused imprisoned Paul and Silas to be called teachers. Isn't it something? When people asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" they admitted that after all, they did not have salvation yet and they did not know at all what they had to do about it.

The answer from Paul and Silas was this; "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved." After all, they knew that family was unimaginably important for the Lord. The Lord desires to save not just some of your family members, but all of them. Furthermore, the term 'family' used in the era of the New Testament did not only refer to someone blood-related, but included all relatives and acquaintances.

This makes us feel anew the greatness of his promise. This jailer of Philippi, did not just whisper, but must have shouted in a loud voice, when he asked what he must do to be saved. He desperately wanted to know it.

Let us pick up one word he screamed in question. It is the word, 'I'. What must "I" do to be saved? Who is 'I' in this sentence? This 'I' refers to a lost person, a slave of sins, the devil and their self. He used to be blind because he could not see the Lord God. He used to be spiritually dead.

He was far removed from the life that comes out of the Lord God. What is spiritual death? Spiritual death refers to living the life you were given at birth. This jailer of the prison used to be spiritually dead until he knew the savior. When this jailer of Philippi was saved, he admitted that he was a sinner. When someone comes to have the desire for salvation, they have already admitted the fact that they were not saved yet, they were blind, slaves and spiritually dead.

The next word to which I would like you to pay attention is "saved." What must I do to be "saved"? It was not "what must I do to become a good man?", that the jailer shouted. He desperately asked what he must do to be saved. He screamed because he desperately wanted to know how he could be liberated from this slavery, how his blind eyes could open and how he could live instead of dying.

The third word is "do". What must I "do" to be saved? What could slaves bound in chains do to liberate themselves? What could a blind man do to open his own eyes? How could dead men come back to life by themselves? There is absolutely nothing they can do. What is the true salvation? What is the principal of the true salvation indeed? Let me summarize it in three points.

Firstly, the true salvation must be something that is enough to satisfy the Lord God. It is only known to the Lord God how and by whom each person can be saved. The jailer was not allowed to choose which way to go in order to be saved. Instead, he was only told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved." The jailer was eventually led by these

words to the salvation. He could not choose a way on his own to save himself. The way prepared for us to the salvation is nothing but the cross and Jesus who died for us on the cross to sacrifice himself.

Secondly, salvation must be thorough enough to wipe all sins away as well as consequences of sins. The salvation must be something that totally erases all sins of the person and gives a new life instead. In the case of this jailer, all his sins had to be forgiven and the new creation had to be accomplished within him by his faith. Our sins have to be redeemed on the cross and new creation must begin within us.

Thirdly, the salvation has to be the execution of a death sentence for sins. The Bible says that the souls that once committed sin cannot evade death. It has to receive the punishment for the sin. The punishment has to be enforced. The jailer believed in Jesus' death for atonement. If we desire to obtain the salvation of the Lord, we need to come to Jesus who died on the cross for us. Let us read some more verses and finish this sermon.

1 John

1:9 **If we make it our habit to confess our sins, in his faithful righteousness he forgives us for those sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.**

The Lord is the one who gives us true promises. He is the one who keeps his word. The Lord also gives us commitment. That is to say, he accomplishes everything that is necessary for us to not commit sins anymore. Jesus did not just release us from the debts of sins, but delivered us from the power of sins. He is also the one who gives us a hand when we fall down.

1 John

2:1 **My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you might not sin. Yet if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus, the Messiah, one who is righteous.**

2:2 **It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's.**

This Lord gives us the promise that is real. He then guarantees that he will keep what he promises and needless to say, he invites us to come to him under any circumstances. That is to say, he invites us to return to the Lord and stay with him. When he does, he gives us the commitment that we will receive the grace of the Lord.

Isaiah

55:6 **Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.**

55:7 **Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous person his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, So he'll have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he'll pardon abundantly.**

These words were written 2700 years ago, but they are still fresh. This is a wonderful calling, wonderful promise. The Lord is the one who asks and seeks from us. He promises that, if we return to him, the Lord will wipe away all obstructions and all wounds will be healed. The Lord performs the miracle even when all hopes seem to have vanished and when there seems to be no possibility for recovery.

Jeremiah

3:22 **"Turn back, unfaithful people, and I'll heal your unfaithfulness." "Look, we're coming to you because you are the Lord our God."**

This is the promise of the Lord, our only savior. It is written, "Look, we're coming to you." This is the very attitude that the Lord desperately desires all of us to take. The Lord is the one who is eagerly waiting for us. He is waiting for us with his arms wide open. "Come to me." We can see from these words that Jesus is not just making a verbal promise, but is sincerely concerned about his believers and waiting for each one of us to come to him.

I'll never turn away the one who comes to me. Those who come to Jesus are absolutely accepted, become the receivers of eternal salvation, are granted the forgiveness of sins and the eternal life. When we understand and respect these facts, we will be overwhelmed by the blessing of the Lord. The grace of the Lord is far too wonderful for us to understand. But still, it is our only hope.

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