

Your Word is Truth.

November 2nd, 2014, Gospel Meeting, Omi Hachiman
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John

17:1 After Jesus had said this, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, so that the Son may glorify you.

17:2 For you have given him authority over all humanity so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him.

17:3 And this is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent—Jesus the Messiah.

17:4 I glorified you on earth by completing the task you gave me to do.

17:5 "So now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

17:6 I have made your name known to these men whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.

17:7 Now they realize that everything you gave me comes from you,

17:8 because the words that you gave me I passed on to them. They have received them and know for sure that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me.

17:9 "I am asking on their behalf. I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those you gave me, because they are yours.

17:10 All that is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine, and I have been glorified through them.

17:11 I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name, the name that you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

17:12 While I was with them, I protected them by the authority that you gave me. I guarded them, and not one of them became lost except the one who was destined for destruction, so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

17:13 "And now I am coming to you, and I say these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.

17:14 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

17:15 I am not asking you to take them out of the world but to protect them from the evil one.

17:16 They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.

17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth."

[International Standard Version]

The Gospel according to John, chapter 17 is a wonderful prayer. I wish I could read it every day. After all, "Your word is truth." This was the conviction of Jesus and his source of joy.

Let me discuss what I am most worried about. Nobody is free from worries. Regardless of whether they have faith or not, all people have something to worry about. One of my largest worries is that there are too many people who do not realize the importance of churches, which represent Jesus' body.

The Church of Jesus is not a mere social gathering. Jesus has promised, "I will build my congregation." He said so because he knew that humans can't build it. Jesus would never fail to keep this promise. For this very reason, the devil, who wants to mess up everything, attempts to attack believers day and night and blind them in order to keep them away from realizing the importance of churches, his body. Sometimes, it looks as if he is going to accomplish his purpose to some extent, but of course he would never win in the true sense. It would be a false victory. Jesus builds his churches, which represent his body. Needless to say, the head of the churches, his body, is no one but Jesus himself. The church as his body is everything to Jesus.

This is a very important verse from the First Epistle to the Corinthians;

1 Corinthians

12:27 Now you are the Messiah's body and individual parts of it.

This is not what he wishes us to be, but in fact, we are already so. This verse simply explains the fact. Those who see this truth with the eyes of their hearts through the illumination of the light from above, that is to say, through the inspiration from above, are blessed. It will dissolve all questions and doubts. As we just sang together in the hymn, "The happiness of living with Lord forever and ever," it is absolutely certain that Jesus will return soon to see us. We are surrounded by troubles and ordeals for which we don't know what to do. Still, we are convinced that Jesus is coming before too long and at that moment of realization, all our problems will dissolve instantly.

Our prayers are important. However, what is more important is the prayer of Jesus. Let us look at this

verse again and see what Jesus said in his prayers.

John

17:17 Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth.

What is most important while learning the Bible? It is to let the Bible reveal itself to you. Thus, when we learn the words in the Bible, we need to understand correctly what the whole Bible is telling us. For example, when we study some gospel or epistle in the New Testament, we need to read it keeping in mind its relationship with other parts of the New and the Old Testament. Hence, when we read some specific part from the Bible, it is important to pay attention to its position. Moreover, instead of being limited to only the verses we are reading, we need to refer back to some earlier pages, or open some other chapters later in the Scripture as necessary.

It is also important to read the Bible with a sense of purpose. We need to pursue the truth sincerely with hunger and thirst, instead of simply seeking to obtain knowledge. The Bible consists of the words of God. When we study the words spoken by the Lord God, it is important to accept them exactly as they are written.

I have four paintings of a man reading the Bible. In the first painting, a big man is reading a small Bible. In the next painting, the big man has become slightly smaller than in the first one, while the Bible has gotten a little larger than before. In the third painting, the man has become even smaller and the Bible has grown almost to the same size as the man. And in the fourth painting, the man is very tiny now while the Bible is much larger than him in size.

What this series of paintings implies is that the man first tried to understand the Bible based on his own interpretation. However, as he continued reading, the Bible itself came to have absolute authority. This man finally learned to read the Bible earnestly and to listen attentively to the words of the Lord God. When he did, the words of the Lord became his blood and flesh as his thoughts dissolved away. Consequently, the words from the Bible became everything to him and the presence of the Lord Jesus increased manifold.

Today, many people do not respect the Lord's will enough. Instead, they interpret the Bible based on their insight and do not listen to his words sincerely. However, when we learn the words of God, we need to put our faith in the absolute authority of the Bible. The Bible is not something to study or research, but consists of the words through which the Lord God himself speaks to us. Thus, we need to listen to it with extreme attention.

Whoever listens to the words of the Lord and obeys them will experience what is written in this verse;

Romans

10:17 Consequently, faith results from listening, and listening results through the word of the Messiah.

Those who refuse to accept and listen to the absolute authority of all things written in the Bible as the words of God will never be able to have lively faith in the Lord. Indeed, the Bible is the world's top bestseller book so to speak. But do you read the Bible to educate yourself or learn something new? Are we supposed to open the page as we feel like and read it aimlessly? This is the wrong attitude to adopt while reading the Bible. When we read the words of God, our true focus should be placed on understanding Jesus from personal experience, encountering Jesus, accepting Jesus, and on knowing the Lord Jesus better every day.

Jesus said, in his confession, "I am the living bread," and then, "Whoever eats me has eternal life." It can be seen in John, chapter 6, verses 51 and 54.

Breads are not baked for the purpose of being displayed in a museum and impressing people. It is not the way breads are supposed to be used. There is no point in baking bread if it is not consumed. The spiritual lives of brothers and sisters who believe in Jesus grow according to the amount of the bread of life they consume. Jesus himself, as the bread of life, has to be consumed by us. Jesus himself actually desires to be so. He actually wants to be our bread of life.

A man called Jeremiah was agonized. He was falsely accused and imprisoned. However, he was pleased although he was in agony. Why was that? It can be seen from his wonderful testimony in the Book of Jeremiah, chapter 15, verse 16;

Jeremiah

15:16 Your words were found, and I consumed them. Your words were joy and my hearts delight.

After all, what Jeremiah was saying was, "If you want to rejoice, consume his words." The Bible is a wonderful treasure for human beings. When David also realized the greatness and importance of the words of the Lord, he wrote this long Psalm 119. Don't worry. I am not going to read the entire Psalm today. Let us read a few verses although I trust that you all know them by heart.

Psalms

119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my pathway.

119:162 I find joy at what you have said like one who has discovered a great treasure.

When we want to express our feelings, we generally do so with words. If I do not speak but keep my mouth shut, you will never know what lies deep in my heart. How can we know Jesus more profoundly and understand him better than now? It is only possible through his words in the Bible.

The Bible is made up of the words of the Lord God. His words are the revelation of the Lord himself. That is to say, it is not specific teaching or doctrine, but the Lord's will that is expressed and revealed in the Bible. Indeed, it is important to read the Bible. However, it should not be read in an effort to study the Scripture or obtain knowledge on so-called Christianity, but in order to understand Jesus and have more intimate fellowship with him through his words in the Bible.

There are some wrong ways of reading the Bible. Some people like to read about the love of the Lord but are not willing to open other pages. They only speak of the love of the Lord. Others know somewhat about being humble. They prefer to read verses that explain how meek the Lord God is and discuss the meekness of the Lord. Contrarily, people of fiery temper tend to be inclined to the judgment of the Lord. These are the consequences of reading the Bible based on their own interpretations.

It is like reading the Bible covered with a cellophane sheet of different colors and it is no wonder that the Bible looks different to readers if they do so. It is not until they take off these colored cellophane sheets and eliminate all their own thoughts that Jesus reveals himself to them. Furthermore, efforts to understand the Bible depending on your intelligence will absolutely fail. This was exactly how the Pharisees and the Bible scholars read the Scripture. Jesus gave them harsh words and rebuked them;

John

5:39 You examine the Scriptures carefully because you suppose that in them you have eternal life. Yet they testify about me.

5:40 But you are not willing to come to me to have life.

Knowledge obtained from the Bible is not important. It is Jesus himself who matters. Jesus mentioned that the Bible testified about him and this makes it extremely valuable. Jesus has promised that his words would remain forever. To read the Bible and to obtain the life are essentially the same. They are definitely not two separate things. It is explained in the

Deuteronomy from the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy

32:47 because they're not just empty words for you—they are your very life."

Paul wrote practically the same words to his beloved disciple Timothy;

2 Timothy

3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.

The Lord God breathed his life into the Bible, when it was written. It was the book written by the passion, breath and the spiritual inspiration of the Lord God. For this reason, the Bible has to be considered as the revelation of the Lord God, instead of the mere teachings of the Lord God. The Lord revealed himself through his words. We need to consume his words as the bread of our lives. The Bible is not there to explain a certain doctrine or theology, but it is the bread of life itself. Jesus said;

Matthew

4:4 One must not live on bread alone, but on every word coming out of the mouth of God.

Jesus himself desires to be the bread of life on which we live. Do we live on Jesus? Do we live on the words that the Lord speaks? According to the Gospel according to John, chapter 6, verse 23, Jesus also mentioned;

John

6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh accomplishes nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

Words in the Bible reveal the Lord himself. To consume his words is to obtain life. When we let his living words come into our minds, we will obtain a new life as the inevitable result. New life will never come as a consequence of logical thought. If the Bible is merely the law to obey or a list of historical facts, it will give us nothing but a heavy burden that ties us down. However, if it is a life, it brings us freedom and joy.

Please let me repeat. The Bible was written neither to educate readers nor to establish new academic disciplines. The Bible is the breath the Lord breathes. It is the breath of the Lord God. The Lord God expressed himself through the Bible and wrapped his words in the Bible. Because the Lord reveals himself in the Bible, we need to accept the words of Jesus as the bread of life and consume them. We have to throw

away the way we used to read the Bible. That is to say, we have to stop reading the Bible through a biased attitude and instead aim at consuming Jesus himself as the bread of life.

When we eat something, we feel its taste. A few years ago, I went to a wonderful Chinese restaurant. New dishes were served one after another, but I never asked the guest sitting next to me how they might taste like. I just tasted them. There is no need to contemplate this or that, ask a question to someone else or refer to some Bible commentaries. What is important is just to consume and be filled with the bread of life.

Once the eyes of your heart are open, there will be no obstacle to understanding the truth. The only things that will matter to us will be whether we satisfy the Lord's will or not and how his words will fill us. Anything that is unable to satisfy your hearts in the true sense is worthless. Let us throw away all such distractions and consume nothing but the bread of life, which represents Jesus himself, as it is the only source that can truly satisfy us. Once we consume his words, they will be digested and give us the strength to live. They will be a part of our body and help us to be transformed to the image of the Lord that is filled with glory.

Please try to have some quiet time every day and use it to consume the words of life.

I once read this article titled, "The Diary of a Bible." The author is not known. It is the monologue of a Bible.

January 15. Been resting for a week. The first few nights of the New Year, my owner read me regularly, but he has now forgotten me already, I guess.

February 2. Clean up time. I was dusted with other things and then put back on the shelf.

February 8. Owner used me for a short time after breakfast looking over a few references. Went to church with owner today.

March 7. Clean up. Dusted again. Returned to the bookshelf. Have been in the hall since my trip to church last month.

April 2. Busy day. Owner hosted people's meeting and had to look up references. He had an awful time finding them but they were there all the time.

May 5. In Grandma's lap again this afternoon. She spent most of her time in Colossians, chapter 2. She shed a tear after reading verses 5 to 7.

May 9. Have been in Grandma's lap again for a few days. It is so comfortable there. She spends most of her time reading and sometimes she just talks to

me.

May 10. Grandma is gone. Back to the same old place. She did kiss me bye before she left.

June 3. Had a couple of four-leaf clovers stuck in me today.

July 1. Packed in a suitcase with clothes and other things. Off on vacation I guess.

July 7. Still in suitcase.

July 10. Still in suitcase, though all else has been taken out by now.

July 14. Home again in my old place. It was quite a long journey. I wonder why I was taken with them because nobody even opened me.

Aug. 1. Rather stuffy and hot. Have two magazines, a novel and an old hat on top of me. I am wishing somebody could take them away.

September 5. I was cleaned up, dusted and put back on the shelf.

September 10. Hanako used me for a few minutes today. She was writing a letter to a friend whose brother died and wanted appropriate verses.

September 30. I was dusted again.

Spiritual life also needs to eat something. Where can we find the food for our spirit? It is in the Bible, that is to say, in the words of the Lord God. The Bible is the inspiration of Jesus himself and Jesus is the bread of life that can fill the hunger of our souls. When we read the Bible, let us contemplate the words and store them deep in our hearts. 99% of the thorny problems we face as believers of Jesus arise from not reading the Bible enough. Let us confess our sins of negligence and admit that we do not read the Bible as much as we are supposed to.

If we do not interact with the Bible in hunger and thirst, if we cannot taste his words profoundly, it is no wonder that we are unable to take even a single step forward spiritually. If we confess our sin of not reading the Bible enough, the Lord will renew our hunger and thirst for his words and then he will speak to us with a new voice. It is explained in the Deuteronomy, 17:19;

Deuteronomy

17:19 It is to remain with him the rest of his life so he may learn to fear the Lord his God and observe all the words of this Law and these statutes, in order to fulfill them.

Let us look at some pages later.

Joshua

1:8 This set of instructions is not to cease being a part of your conversations. Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to carry out everything that's written in it.

I will finish this sermon with the Psalm 119. I won't read the entire Psalm but just a few verses.

Psalms

119:72 Instruction that comes from you is better for me than thousands of gold and silver coins.

119:97 How I love your instruction! Every day it is my meditation.

119:140 Your word is very pure, and your servant loves it.

We will be blessed if we have an attitude like David's.

End