

The Reason We Were Saved.

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1 Corinthians

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9:27 No, I keep on disciplining my body, making it serve me so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not somehow be disqualified.
[International Standard Version]

Today, this sermon is titled “The Reason We Were Saved.” I would like to discuss why we were saved and what the mission given to the believers is.

Of course, it is unimaginably important to become Christians, that is to say, to be saved. To be saved is to obtain the true salvation through an understanding of the savior.

Needless to say, we will never be saved unless we seek the salvation. For this reason, the Lord gives us much pain and anguish. However, this does not mean that the Lord wants to make us suffer.

Some people, when they suffer, take it as bad luck, their destiny or a divine punishment. However, there is no God who needs to punish humans, which is itself a wonderful blessing. When some people have their problems resolved temporarily, they consider it the salvation. For example, when they have their husband saved, have their children come to listen to them, or have their illness healed, they feel grateful and believe it is exactly the salvation they obtained. However, rather than solving trivial problems in our lives, the true God gives us ordeals and agonies as the revelation of his love. The fundamental solution to all problems is to know the Lord. It is to know him personally.

When David, the king 3000 years ago understood who the Lord was, he could say;

Psalms

118:14 The Lord is my strength and protector, for he has become my deliverer.

The salvation is neither a property, nor a treasure, but it is the Lord himself. Isaiah also experienced this fact and wrote;

Isaiah

12:2 Look! God—yes God—is my salvation; I will

trust, and not be afraid. For the Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.

I repeat that the salvation is not any material experience but it is the Lord himself. Mary confessed when she bore Jesus;

Luke

1:46 Then Mary said, “my soul praises the greatness of the Lord!

1:47 My spirit exults in God, my Savior.”

It is a wonderful confession, isn't it? It is not until we know the God of salvation that we can live a truly fulfilled life in this world. Truly fulfilled lives are built upon the foundation of eternal life, peace with the Lord God, forgiveness of sins as well as the conviction that Jesus is there to care about us, lead us and protect us.

There is no treasure like the conviction that after death, we will live in an eternal fellowship with Jesus and eventually share in his glory.

When we think of becoming one with the Lord forever, we are compelled to worship him. After all, everything in this world is transient and fragile. There is only one thing which is truly eternal and it remains forever.

We have to aim at the eternal truth and set our minds together. To fight out this battle of faith, we have to be determined to spend all spiritual energies granted to us and dedicate everything to the Lord. Then, how can we tell whether people truly belong to the Lord or not?

Firstly, they come to love the Bible which consists of the words of the Lord. Secondly, they seek fellowship with believers in the Lord. Thirdly, they offer prayers of thanks and plead in all aspects of their lives. Fourthly, they stay away from people and things that appear evil. These are the proofs that indicate the victory of Jesus.

The mission of all brothers and sisters who choose to belong to the Lord Jesus is to testify to Jesus himself. As the presence of Jesus grows stronger within us, we will feel more compelled to testify to Jesus faithfully.

This implies that our outward testimonies totally depend on the relationship between Jesus and ourselves. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit more and more, we will feel impelled to proclaim our gratitude and joy of being saved to as many people as we can.

We have to recognize clearly what Jesus means to each one of us. All brothers and sisters who choose

to belong to Jesus can testify to him.

And testimonies can be done wherever we want. Your words and behavior can testify of him to anyone regardless of whether you have an amicable relationship with them or not. When the Lord Jesus opens the eyes of our hearts, it is then that we begin to testify to Jesus boldly, filled with gratitude and joy.

However, testimony always is connected with battle. The word 'race' is used in many parts of the Bible instead of 'battle'. It is a race that aims toward the goal of the Lord appearing just in front of our eyes. That is to say, we keep pursuing the fight in order to win the victory of God's heavenly call in the Messiah Jesus.

Philippians

3:14 I keep pursuing the goal to win the prize of God's heavenly call in the Messiah Jesus.

Colossians

3:1 Therefore, if you have been raised with the Messiah, keep focusing on the things that are above, where the Messiah is seated at the right hand of God.

3:2 Keep your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.

Now, in addition to the real battle, let us look quickly at boxing. In the Greek era, one of the most important sports in athletic events was boxing. This also seems to have been one of the fiercest sports.

In this game, fighters smashed each other. In particular, they tried to hit each other in the face viciously, which attracted the audience. Punching beneath the eyes was most fatal, which could instantly knock out the opponent. Paul used this expression in the Bible.

1 Corinthians

9:26 That is the way I run, with a clear goal in mind. That is the way I fight, not like someone shadow boxing.

9:27 No, I keep on disciplining my body, making it serve me so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not somehow be disqualified.

Paul clearly understood that he might be disqualified. When he wrote in here, "I keep on disciplining my body, making it serve me," he meant that by punching his own body, especially beneath his eyes, he wanted to knock himself out completely.

Let me explain it this way. Christians should place no value on their own life at all. That is to say, if our self-centered thoughts, desires and pursuit of comforts in life become an obstacle to winning the battle of our faith, these things should be flatly refused.

We ought to turn our eyes away from all things that may possibly stain our spirits and we should close our ears to all kinds of slander. James mentioned this in these verses;

James

3:7 For all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures can be or have been tamed by humans,

3:8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is an uncontrollable evil filled with deadly poison.

3:10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. It should not be like this, my brothers!

This was what James wrote to the believers of his time.

The third most popular sport in the Greece of those days was wrestling, which was very much like Sumo of Japan. In this game, two men wrestled with each other until the one won by pushing down the opponent onto his back on the ground. In Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 6, Paul described this struggle as an extremely violent fight in which fighters grip each other in their arms.

Ephesians

6:12 For our struggle is not against human opponents, but against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in the darkness around us, and evil spiritual forces in the heavenly realm.

Paul knew that it was not acceptable to pay no attention to our enemy. If you are not serious enough in the battle against the power of the darkness, you would be made into a slave of the devil and consequently, end up in fanatic belief.

When people fall into this fanatic state, their eyes are blinded and they get arrogant and insensitive to the danger of faith. In fact, it affects their judgment, causing them to lose their ethics and morals. Consequently, they develop a wrong attitude toward Jesus in many aspects.

If this condition continues too long, our faith will be damaged. When our enemy sees it, he will begin to attack us suddenly and will attempt to defeat us through the sins of the flesh. This exactly is how the sin of the flesh is brought about.

We have seen many examples of brothers and sisters who once were blessed by Jesus, but had fallen into this state and were fiercely attacked by the devil, which damaged their faith and devastated their lives. It was for this reason that Paul warned people not to lose sight of their enemy.

We always have to stay watchful to the words telling us that the enemy is nearby. And the battle with this

enemy must be won. This enemy tries to tempt us in various ways in an attempt to crush us. We should never forget that this enemy is nearby.

We always have to be fighters. As we continue to fight this battle, we should never lose hope. Because Jesus is present and he fights on our side.

Jesus is way stronger than this enemy. Therefore, we ought to be armed with the armor of the Lord and strengthen ourselves by the great power of Jesus. And we have to be the winners in this battle.

In this battle, the strength of Jesus will undoubtedly defeat this enemy and crush him to the ground. The most important weapon used in this battle with the powers of darkness is, needless to say, prayer.

Prayer is not merely the way we, the children of the true living Lord God, talk to the Father God in heaven. It is not just to call or praise the name of Jesus. Nor is it used to worship or give thanks for the blessings. Furthermore, it does not point toward pleading to the Lord.

Philippians

4:6 Never worry about anything. Instead, in every situation let your petitions be made known to God through prayers and requests, with thanksgiving.

We should not forget that, in addition to all the above, true prayer is used to win the battle against the powers of the darkness.

The battle through prayers can be found in many verses from the Bible. It indicates that the Lord needs brothers and sisters who fight together through their prayers. If we do not participate in such a battle through prayers, the devil will attempt to make us fall asleep and lure us into his trap.

However, it is a fact that throughout history, there have always been faithful Christians who overthrew the devil in battles of prayers. Those who pray true and sincere prayers are stronger than the devil. Prayer is the true strength against which the devil does not stand a chance.

These things remind me of a painting I saw in a Church in Germany. In that painting, a weighing scale is drawn with one little child praying on one side and heavy weights placed on the other side. Three servants of the devil are on top of the weights, trying to push down the scale pan, and two daemons are pulling down the same scale pan toward the ground.

No matter how hard the daemons try, they cannot move down the scale pan on the other side. I think that the painter believed that the power of prayer is way stronger than the daemons and wanted to

express it in this painting.

The power of the prayer of one little child is much stronger than the power of all the daemons in this world. Faithful prayer is strong enough to break down the attack of the devil or any worldly authority. Faith is the power of Jesus, which surpasses all the strength of the devil.

James

5:16 Therefore, make it your habit to confess your sins to one another and to pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Those who pray are the victors. In other words, Jesus himself is the true strength. Jesus is not merely the judge of the Last Judgment, but he is the fountain which provides the power to those who participate in the race in the stadium.

This is what Jesus commands us; "You have to be the fighters and racers. Always run fixing your attention on the goal above you. Do not be preoccupied with worldly concerns but instead keep running, keeping your eyes on what lies above. Be true boxers and wrestlers." As Paul mentioned, let us keep on disciplining our body as we continue to run.

He also tells us to become a true wrestler. Our struggle is not against flesh or human opponents, but it is the battle against the invisible world. He commanded us to become the racer, the boxer and the wrestler. The Lord is not asking the impossible from us. He rather provides us with all the strength required to uphold his commands and obey him.

The secret to win this battle lies in, needless to say, the cross. The cross is powerless as far as it is just knowledge. However, when the cross of Jesus comes into our lives, we can understand it from our daily experience.

Jesus, who was crucified for us is our only true Lord and our governor. We experience this very fact every day in our lives. For us, our faith and our lives must become one. If the power from above serves as the driving force in our daily lives, it will be a wonderful blessing.

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