

## Accomplished Plan of Salvation (6)

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 ゴットホルド・ベック

John

3:1 Now there was a man from the Pharisees, a leader of the Jews, whose name was Nicodemus.  
 3:2 He came to Jesus at night and told him, "Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher, because no one can perform these signs that you are doing unless God is with him."  
 3:3 Jesus replied to him, "Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God."  
 3:4 Nicodemus asked him, "How can a person be born when he is old? He can't go back into his mother's womb a second time and be born, can he?"  
 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.  
 3:6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.  
 3:7 Don't be astonished that I told you, 'All of you must be born from above.'  
 3:8 The wind blows where it wants to. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. That's the way it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."  
 3:9 Nicodemus asked him, "How can that be?"  
 3:10 Jesus answered him, "You're a teacher of Israel, and you can't understand this?  
 3:11 Truly, I tell you emphatically, we know what we're talking about, and we testify about what we've seen. Yet you people do not accept our testimony.  
 3:12 If I have told you people about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?  
 3:13 "No one has gone up to heaven except the one who came down from heaven, the Son of Man who is in heaven.  
 3:14 Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
 3:15 so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.  
 3:16 "For this is how God loved the world: He gave his unique Son so that everyone who believes in him might not be lost but have eternal life.  
 3:17 Because God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.  
 3:18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been

condemned, because he has not believed in the name of God's unique Son.

3:19 And this is the basis for judgment: The light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light because their actions were evil.

3:20 Everyone who practices wickedness hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his actions may not be exposed.

3:21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may become evident that his actions have God's approval."

[International Standard Version]

Genesis

1:1 In the beginning, God created the universe.

1:2 When the earth was as yet unformed and desolate, with the surface of the ocean depths shrouded in darkness, and while the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters,

1:3 God said, "Let there be light!" So there was light.

2 Corinthians

4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus the Messiah.

We have learned in the past meetings, that the Lord God has created humans perfectly in a physical and spiritual sense. The Lord God created humans in the image of himself as stated in the Bible. As he created humans, he intended us to possess the nature of God, to answer to the love of God and to have an eternal life.

In this series of sermons, we took a close look at this great grace which was offered to us, the choice that caused a horrible disaster for all mankind as well as the failure that brought a catastrophic consequence to the world. We learned that Adam, the first man, fell into an unimaginably desperate situation. He severed fellowship with the Lord God, chose to be connected with the devil and died spiritually.

We also observed the unspeakably complicated situation that humans face, because the Lord God is so sacred that he cannot allow sinners to slip away without being punished and expelled. Furthermore, the Lord God is the embodiment of love, which makes him desperately want to save all humans; however, he would never let his own sacredness be compromised because of that.

We have also learned together that the plan of salvation of the Lord God has been completely accomplished. The Lord prophesied that he will become a man of God and in actuality, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus was born into this world. He manifested his divinity and at the same time,

revealed his humanity.

Jesus was born into this world as human so that he could bear the debts of mankind on himself and die on the cross. The sacrificial death of Jesus is a wonderful way of salvation, which cannot be expressed in language.

As we have learned in our previous meetings, while the tomb of Jesus signified a superficial victory of the devil, the resurrection of Jesus was a clear and definite victory of the Lord God. Jesus ascended to heaven. Jesus' being raised high proved the great victory of the Lord God.

These things proved that the plan of salvation of the Lord God has been completely accomplished. It can be seen in his word in the Gospel according to John, chapter 19, verse 30, "It is finished." All things took place at the initiative of the Lord. All things were accomplished. Now, it is left to the hands of humans whether to accept the salvation offered by the Lord God or not. Therefore, today I would like to discuss this subject; "The salvation of God that is in your hands."

To begin with, what is the plan of the Lord God? What is it that we are supposed to receive in our hands? Will it be possible for us to experience the true salvation Jesus has accomplished in our life?

How can spiritually dead men come back to life? How can the lost people be saved? Let us set up these questions for the sake of discussion and look for an answer. The plan of the Lord God is for us to share the nature of God. We all should receive the life of Jesus.

John  
1:4 In him was life.

We need to possess the same life as the life of Jesus, Son of God, who has been raised high in heaven. There is a life that was not created by anyone. This life is within Jesus and is being offered to us. If we simply accept Jesus, we will obtain this eternal life.

1 John  
5:12 The person who has the Son has this life.  
The person who does not have the Son of God does not have this life.

What is critical for us is not to realize the presence of an eternal life; it is to possess it. Today, we are living between two worlds; one is a world of sin and death that is in Adam. The other is a world of the eternal life which exists within Jesus.

All those who refuse the forgiveness of their sins by the blood Jesus shed are living in the world of sin

and death. Contrarily, whoever accepted Jesus as their savior are given an eternal life. After all, they are living in the true sense of the word. When people accept Jesus, they all would make the same confession as Paul;

Colossians  
1:13 God has rescued us from the power of darkness and has brought us into the kingdom of the Son whom he loves.

It is not telling us that God might bring us some day. It is stated in the past tense; "God has brought us." Those who have accepted Jesus would look back on their past and realize how they used to live in the darkness; then, as they look at their present status, they find that they have been brought into the kingdom ruled by the Son, whom God loves.

How pitiful are those who are comfortable and satisfied within the darkness. Contrarily, those who walk in the light of Jesus are blessed. Between the light and darkness, that is to say, between the world of sin and death and the world of eternal life, stands the cross. The cross is there to divide these two worlds. Let us look at some verses, which consist of the most important part of the Old Testament. Many Jews consistently refuse to read these verses because, if these verses which refer to Jesus are true, it would lead to the overthrow of their belief.

Isaiah  
53:1 "Who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
53:2 For he grew up before him like a tender plant, and like a root out of a dry ground; he had no form and he had no majesty that we should look at him, and there is no attractiveness that we should desire him.  
53:3 "He was despised and rejected by others, and a man of sorrows, intimately familiar with suffering; and like one from whom people hide their faces; and we despised him and did not value him.  
53:4 "Surely he has borne our sufferings and carried our sorrows; yet we considered him stricken, and struck down by God, and afflicted.  
53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that made us whole was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed.  
53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, each of us, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.  
53:7 He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he didn't open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, as a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

The cross is where the human flesh is denied by God. Although many people struggle to enter the

eternal life through their own efforts, benevolence or religion, the Lord clearly declares by the cross that all such human efforts are totally fruitless.

However, at the same time, we all are to reach the cross, where the eternal life is. The cross marks the terminal point of the life of the old man in Adam and the starting point of new life in Jesus. What is it that humans absolutely need to obtain? What we need is a life in Jesus.

Then, what does it take for us to obtain an eternal life? The Bible gives a clear and definite answer to this question. It is to be newly reborn. Let me read again the verses we read at the beginning of this sermon.

John

3:3 Jesus replied to him, "Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God."

3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, I tell you emphatically, unless a person is born of water and Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

10:10 I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Jesus answered the question with these words. 'Life' is what absolutely matters for us. If you are spiritually dead, first you need to come back to life. You have to be liberated from the slavery of the devil. All those who are heading toward destruction, need to be taken back to the salvation.

Then, how can these things happen? It can be accomplished by no one but Jesus, who was crucified and then resurrected. How could this salvation be carried out?

The Father God had this plan of salvation from everlasting and Jesus, his Son the God had put this plan into practice. Furthermore, through the work of the Holy Spirit, all sinners are allowed to hold onto this salvation.

I presented this question to you earlier; "How can you obtain the salvation?" The first answer was that it can be done through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.

Just like it used to hover over the unformed and desolate earth, the Holy Spirit is still hovering over humans and covering them. The Holy Spirit prepares the way for us to reach the word of God. Even before the God said, "let there be light," the Holy Spirit was already working to prepare the way, through which the word of God would be spread.

Spiritually dead men need to be taken back to life. In

other words, they need to restore the fellowship with the Lord God. Fellowship with God is created by the Holy Spirit and the word in the Bible. When the Sacred God opens his mouth, it brings death to all sinners. Contrarily, when the God of salvation speaks, it brings life.

Therefore, we cannot stress too much the significance of reading and listening to the word of the Lord God. When we think of this, we can't help but realize the importance of earnestly letting as many people know about Jesus as possible. The word of the Lord first works on our feelings. We either see it or hear it.

Then, this word is accepted through the power of our soul. The function of the soul is to think, feel and desire. Humans think very hard about the word of God they hear. They contemplate its meaning. And this word begins to affect their lives.

Some people believe in the word of God and accept it, while others refuse it. Many people must have seen and heard the word of the cross. When they did, they contemplated the word they heard, which made them realize the true problem they were facing.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, they realized how pitiful they were and that they were heading toward destruction. Those who thus admitted their misery would be granted the strength required to believe in Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit.

At that very moment, their determination to surrender their life to Jesus is strengthened. The crucified savior makes it possible for them to be transferred from the world of sins to eternal life. When someone hears his word, accepts it and is touched by it in his heart, this word will truly come into his spirit and life.

When sinners accepted that the death of Jesus was the sacrifice, they begin to cry out of joy and gratitude for Jesus' dying on behalf of them. They would say within their hearts, "Lord, your blood was shed for me, and you died for me. My life belongs to you now, Lord. I am so grateful for your forgiveness." When people make a confession like this, the Lord God will pour the eternal life into their spirit. This is the regeneration stated in the Bible.

Paul left these words in his letter to Romans, chapter 8;

Romans

8:10 But if the Messiah is in you, your bodies are dead due to sin, but the spirit is alive due to righteousness.

The spirit of men is no longer dead but is alive now by being sustained by the Holy Spirit of God.

## 2 Corinthians

5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in the Messiah, he is a new creation. Old things have disappeared, and—look!—all things have become new!

The new creation is possible through nothing but a fellowship with the Lord Jesus. When we obtain the fellowship with Jesus, it will change our perspective, thoughts, value and purpose of life. Not only Paul but Peter too explained the same fact;

## 2 Peter

1:4 Through these he has given us his precious and wonderful promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, seeing that you have escaped the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires.

By accepting Jesus, and by having the Holy Spirit dwelling inside, humans will share in the nature of the Lord God. When they do, they are given eternal life in their spirits. The eternal life is in them. It is a life that will never perish. The spirit of men will come back from death. It will be reborn. The Holy Spirit dwells in the spirit of every man who was reborn. The Holy Spirit dwells inside all saved people.

We have been looking at two questions. The first question was what we should receive, and the answer was the eternal life that is in Jesus. The second question was how it can be received, and the answer was through nothing but the regeneration.

Regeneration has absolutely nothing to do with any kind of improvement of your life, reformation, change in appearance, vainglory, or discipline. Regeneration is to be recreated as a totally new person and nothing else. The Lord God desires to recreate us fundamentally.

The Lord God is not seeking fanatic or mindless believers of himself, but wants someone who is ready to be totally renewed. As we can see from John, chapter 3 we read today, a man called Nicodemus came to meet Jesus because he wanted to pour out everything he had in his heart.

It was not possible for him to come to see Jesus personally during daytime. Nicodemus could not think of other idea than sneaking in at midnight even though he was afraid to bother Jesus. He was one of the so-called Pharisees, who were on those days, considered as the ones who devoted their whole life to accomplish the intention of the Lord God. Nicodemus was a religious leader of Israel, well-esteemed teacher and very trusted person.

However, he was not convinced of his salvation yet and did not know the joy of salvation. That is to say, he had never experienced the everlasting true

delight yet. For some reason, he was spontaneously attracted by Jesus. He must have heard about Jesus from many people, but was not satisfied just by hearing about Jesus.

He came to see Jesus because he desperately wanted to have personal fellowship with Jesus. What humans absolutely need is neither an ethical or moral standard nor religious teachings.

It is to have intimate fellowship with Jesus himself. To this man, Nicodemus, Jesus straightforwardly explained the importance of regeneration and clearly stated that he needed to be born from above, because otherwise he would never be able to see the kingdom of God, that is to say, he would never be saved after all.

To see the kingdom of God refers to be saved. True salvation can be obtained through regeneration alone. Without conversion of mind, there will be no salvation, no liberation, no hope.

Not only the tax collector, Zacchaeus, who accumulated wealth through illicit means, not only the woman of Samaria, who married five times and was still living with a man without getting married, but even the well-respected model teacher and knowledgeable leader, Nicodemus had to go through the regeneration in order to avoid the eternal destruction.

All those who are born into this life have to go through death twice. The first death is a physical destruction, which is so-called death in the general sense. The second death refers to the separation from the presence of God, which forces you to live permanently without joy, consolation and the fountain of peace.

Contrarily, those who were born twice will go through death only once. After people are born as flesh, some of them are regenerated through the encounter with Jesus and born from above as new men. Such people only have to experience death once.

Those who are newly born from above by knowing Jesus will still experience the death of their flesh. However, it is clearly stated in the Bible that after physical death, they will be allowed to come back to the Lord God and stay with him forever. What the Lord God demands from us is an absolute purity, sincerity and unlimited love.

However, there is no human being who can fulfill this requirement of the Lord God completely. There is absolutely nobody who reaches this standard. Until we are newly reborn, we can't help but be controlled by sin and the devil, which leads us to an eternal destruction. The only way out to escape from this is to bow down your head; it is to admit and confess

your arrogance in front of the Lord God.

Acts

4:12 There is no salvation by anyone else, for there is no other name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved.

End