

We Were Saved to Serve Him.

March 15th, 2016, Kichijouji Bible Study
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 2016年3月15日、吉祥寺学び会
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Malachi

3:10 "Bring the entire tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. So put me to the test in this right now," says the Lord of the Heavenly Armies, "and see if I won't throw open the windows of heaven for you and pour out on you blessing without measure."

[International Standard Version]

Luke

11:13 "So if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who keep on asking him!"

11:9 "So I say to you: Keep asking, and it will be given you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened for you,

11:10 "Because everyone who keeps asking will receive, and the person who keeps searching will find, and the person who keeps knocking will have the door opened."

22:24 "Now an argument sprang up among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest.

22:25 But he told them, 'The kings of the unbelievers lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called benefactors.

22:26 But you are not to do so. On the contrary, the greatest among you should become like the youngest, and the one who leads should become like the one who serves.

22:27 Because who is greater, the one who sits at the table, or the one who serves? It is the one at the table, isn't it? But I am among you as one who serves.

22:28 You are the ones who have always stood by me in my trials.

22:29 And I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father has conferred a kingdom on me,

22:30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit down on thrones to govern the twelve tribes of Israel."

At the entrance of the divine school in Aidlingen, Germany, there is a sign which says, "We were saved

to serve Him." About 70 years ago, I was moved every time I went in there and saw this sign. Not only impressed by that sign, but I was always deeply touched by the spirit of the people living and working there and how clearly the image of Jesus was formed inside each one of them.

Paul wrote to his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica, "You turned away from idols to serve a living and true God." Of course, the Holy Spirit is calling us too.

2 Corinthians

5:15 "He died for all people, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and rose for them."

How can we become true servants of the Lord and serve the true God? Where is the source of true service to the Lord? There is a rule we have to obey in order to serve the Lord.

Without this rule, there could be no true service. The Lord God explains this rule to us in His Word. I believe that it is indispensable to follow this rule strictly as we serve the Lord; it is as important as the rule we need to understand for our salvation.

The condition of our salvation is that we accept and appreciate the death and the resurrection of Jesus with a pure and supple mind like little children. How did we come to belong to Jesus? Was it by reading the Bible? Was it by praying?

Or, was it by attending meetings of the assembly and striving to become a good person? Of course, it was not. We understood that Jesus died for our sins and transgressions and was then resurrected. It occurred when we took this fact to our hearts and thanked Jesus that we were convinced of our salvation.

There will be no salvation if you fail to follow this very rule even a little. Understanding the death of Jesus and His resurrection is the rule behind the salvation. Then, what is the rule of our service? The rule we have to follow to serve the Lord is to accept and experience personally the death of Jesus and His resurrection.

Until we absorb this rule, our service is totally valueless and will never bear eternal fruit. Then, what does it practically mean to go through His death and resurrection? It is written in the Bible that souls that have committed sins cannot evade death. Jesus died to save us who were heading toward destruction. He sacrificed Himself on our behalf. The Lord Jesus gave up His own life for us and shed His blood.

No matter what others say, even when we are caught

in mistrust or the Devil comes to tempt us, knowing that the blood of Jesus has atoned for our sins which satisfied the Father God, we can rejoice in the Lord.

However, the death of Jesus and His resurrection have even more significant meaning. Jesus died for our sins. Furthermore, He chose to die because of the nature of our sins.

Our old self was crucified along with Jesus. We see ourselves dead with regard to our sins, but we also see ourselves alive in Jesus when we think of the Lord God. Because of this, we have been serving, believing that it would please the Lord God.

Then, the battle began. It was a battle described in Romans, chapter 7. We all desperately desire to become holy, serve the Lord and devote ourselves to the Him. Nevertheless, in spite of all our efforts, we end up finding ourselves so miserable crying out, "Oh, what a wicked man I am."

Not only are we disqualified to serve the Lord, we are even unable to lead a sacred life. We cannot serve the Lord on our own. This is what chapter 7 of Romans is clearly telling us. We need to go through great troubles and sufferings to truly recognize this fact. It is absolutely necessary in order for us to become true servants of the God.

What is the most important requirement in the service to the Lord? We need to have the Holy Spirit poured on us and be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to serve Him. When did the Holy Spirit come down into this world? The Holy Spirit came down after Jesus died, resurrected and sat on the right hand of His Father God. The Holy Spirit was poured out on all churches. However, in order for us to receive the Holy Spirit personally, we need to experience personally the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There already were some servants of the Lord in the era of the Old Testament, who experienced the death and resurrection.

Exodus

4:10 "Then Moses told the Lord, 'Please, Lord, I'm not eloquent. I never was in the past nor am I now since you spoke to your servant. In fact, I talk too slowly and I have a speech impediment.'"

This was the humble confession of Moses. All other people who served the Lord, after all, were compelled to confess the same way.

Isaiah

6:5 "How terrible it will be for me!" I cried, 'because I am ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips, and I live

among a people with unclean lips! And my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of the Heavenly Armies!"

6:9 'Go!' he responded. 'Tell this people.'

Judges

6:15 "Gideon responded. 'Sir, how will I deliver Israel? Look—my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and I'm the youngest in my father's household.'"

6:34 "So the Spirit of the Lord took control of Gideon."

There is an expression that the Spirit wore Gideon (in another translation of the Bible). When we wear clothes, people see the clothes covering us outwardly. Likewise, Gideon covered the outside of the Holy Spirit just like a cloth and the Holy Spirit began to dwell inside Gideon. Jeremiah had a similar experience.

Jeremiah

1:6 "I replied, 'Ah, Lord God! Look, I don't know how to speak, because I'm only a young man.'"

1:7 "Then the Lord told me, 'Don't say, "I'm only a young man," for you will go everywhere I send you, and you will speak everything I command you.'"

Amos heard practically the same words.

Amos

7:14 "Amos replied in answer to Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor am I a prophet's son, for I have been shepherding and picking the fruit of sycamore trees.'

7:15 But the Lord took me from tending the flock and the Lord kept saying to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"

These servants of the Lord who appeared in the Old Testament were made to realize that the service for the Lord was impossible on their own and it would never be possible without the strength of the Lord God. Actually, it is the Lord Himself, who desires to assist people to serve Him.

Our innate abilities and talents are absolutely useless to the Lord unless we go through the death and the resurrection. Our talent we were born with, education, or intelligence; no matter how hard we serve the Lord with these things, such service would never bear eternal fruit unless we have passed through the death and the resurrection.

Moses had a great innate ability and good education. He was enthusiastic, brave and had wonderful

intelligence. It is believed that Isaiah and Jeremiah, were also well educated and had good social status and fame. With regard to the New Testament, Paul had the best kind of education of his time.

Contrarily, Amos and Gideon were commoners, who did not have a good education. Disciples of Jesus were from poor families and only had general education. Their social status was not very high. They were all ordinary and unlearned people. However, these people who served the Lord all had exactly the same experience.

They all experienced the death and the resurrection. The Lord God does not intend to use any innate ability or talents of humans. His intention is first, to lead his servants to spiritual bankruptcy, so that the Lord Himself may work through them. Jesus had shown such an example of Himself.

When did the service of Jesus begin? It was after He was baptized. The baptism represents death and resurrection. When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God descended from the heavens like a dove. Jesus was filled with the strength of the Holy Spirit and soon the true service began.

In what way do we intend to serve the Lord? Jesus said to His disciples, "Stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." And then, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)."

It is not possible without the help of the Holy Spirit for us to become the true servants of the Lord. When will the Holy Spirit begin to use us? It begins to use us after we experience the death and the resurrection. As I just mentioned, the rule of the service, so to speak is that, the service must be done after we understand the death and His resurrection and have them as our personal experience.

Unless we work according to this rule, our service is totally valueless and would never bear eternal fruit. What is the ability required in the service of the Lord? Let us discuss now, whether we can serve the Lord and do true service by our own strength or not.

Can we do something for the Lord on our own? When we try to serve the Lord with what we were born with, can the Lord use it? It is extremely important to find answers to these questions. Needless to say, our innate, wicked nature is useless in our service for the Lord. Then, how about our good intention? Will it be useful in our service to the Lord? Or, is it totally

valueless too? Our good rationality, our good faith; can these things be used in our service to the Lord?

Let us say, for example, someone quite knowledgeable in history or science is converted and becomes a believer. By this, the goal of his living has been certainly changed. However, he would now try to learn the epistle to the Ephesians or the first Corinthians, exactly in the same way that he has learned history or science.

Let us say, now, a spokesman who works for some advertising company is converted and becomes a visible believer. People would encourage him to become a preacher. Although for this spokesman, the meaning of life has certainly changed, he is still working with the same ability he had before he was converted. All those who serve the Lord, just like Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Gideon did, need to realize that their old innate nature is absolutely useless in their service for the Lord.

Isaiah exclaimed to the Lord, "I am ruined! I'm a man with unclean lips." Being unclean refers to a status in which our own strength and the strength of the Holy Spirit are mixed up inside. On the other hand, to be clean is to come under the complete control of the Holy Spirit.

In our current state, we cannot help but say, "We are so unclean. Lord, please stay away from me." We are exactly like Isaiah when he looked at himself and screamed, "how wicked I am." Have we already reached this mindset? Jesus himself has confessed, "I can do nothing on my own accord. The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing."

Although Jesus had no sin at all, He neither defended Himself, nor tried to accomplish anything by Himself. Even Jesus, who had no sin, had to learn to completely rely on the Lord alone in order to become God's servant. We are commanded to rely on the Lord instead of our own strength.

We have to realize that we cannot perform even the smallest service on our own accord. Let us understand that the Holy Spirit alone is the one who works within us, who makes it possible for us to serve the Lord and accomplish His purpose. The service we do on our own accord is temporal, and it would never fulfill the purpose of the Lord. It would neither please the Lord's heart.

Judges

7:2 "The Lord told Gideon, 'You have too many soldiers with you for me to drop Midian into their

hands, because Israel would become arrogant and say, "It was my own abilities that delivered me."

1 Corinthians

1:31 "Therefore, as it is written, 'The person who boasts must boast in the Lord.'"

What matters is that all honor and all glory is to be given to the Lord. At the time of the salvation of mankind, all things were done by the Lord on our behalf. There was no human involvement in the salvation of mankind. We received eternal life as a gift from Him.

If we have attempted to do something on our own, it would have hindered salvation. The same is true for our service to the Lord. The Lord does not need to use the power or ability of humans in performing His own work. The intention of the Lord is to dwell in human hearts through the Holy Spirit and then to work by Himself through the strength of the Holy Spirit.

In so doing, he intends to give all glory to Himself. In order for the Holy Spirit to work within us, we need to go through our death. Sometimes, we look at a very intelligent person and think, if such a clever and talented man becomes Christian, it would be a great service to the Lord. But, it will never go that way.

No matter what great communication skills, judgment, ability, and intelligence some Christians have, as far as it is their innate ability, it does not benefit them in their service. Jesus said, in the Gospel according to John, chapter 3, verse 6, "What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit."

All innate nature or ability belongs to the flesh as long as it is not under the control of the Holy Spirit and it does nothing but glorifies humans. The most critical point as we engage in the service of the Lord is where the strength we serve with comes from. What we actually do does not matter much.

What matters is with what strength we do that service. Very often, we focus on what we do in our service and what our purpose is in that service, but we do not pay much attention to the way that the goal of the service will be attained. Some people say that they would use any means to accomplish their goals and they actually work that way. Many people who were saved by the grace of the Lord wish to participate in the service for the Lord. But, as long as they do so on their own accord, it would never please the Lord. Jesus said:

John
15:5 "...because apart from me you can do nothing."

Suppose there are two Christians in here; Mr. A. and Mr. B. Mr. A is quite talkative and actually he is very good at making speeches. However, he is quite incompetent in practical work. Contrarily, Mr. B is not good at talking at all, but he is versatile and helpful in practical matters. Let us say that they were invited to some bible meeting and were asked to preach.

Mr. A is very good at talking. He would pray, of course. But, he won't pray as hard as Mr. B will. On the other hand, Mr. B., being aware that he is less talkative and not good at speech, would pray harder and harder, "Lord, I will be ruined if you do not help me."

Now, let us assume that they both were asked to do some practical work. What would happen? Now, Mr. B. does not plead to the Lord as hard as before because he knows that this is his strongest area. Mr. A., lamenting his own incompetence, would cry out to the Lord. He would pray a sincere prayer this time. As we think of these two brothers, we realize very well that both of them are not doing true service before the Lord.

We too, in some cases serve based on our strength and in another case, we ask for the help of the Lord. Our innate ability, our innate strength needs to be put to death. In every instance, we have to totally depend on the Lord alone. Jesus said in the Gospel according to John, chapter 15, verse 5, "apart from me you can do nothing."

Do you truly believe in this word? You may not want to agree with this word somewhere in your heart. We can read the Bible by ourselves, we can pray and we can hold meetings all by ourselves indeed, can't we? What He meant in this verse was that, if we do something without the Lord, without Jesus, its outcome is absolutely meaningless and it will bear no fruit at all. Any service would be burnt down and vanish away just like a chunk of wood or straw if it is not the work of the Lord dwelling in us.

These are the words Jesus Himself said. We need to take them very seriously. We dare not to do anything on our own. There are a lot of things we can do, but we won't do anything unless it pleases the Lord. We should totally rely on the Lord and keep these words in our mind.

We all ought to completely rely on the Lord instead of the abilities or talents each one of us has. Let us try to become true servants and be useful to the Lord. The only power of the service that pleases the Lord comes from the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. In order to understand this, we have to go through a lot of

troubles and pains. Moses fed sheep in the wilderness for 40 years.

For Moses, who was in the prime of his life and was filled with strength, this must have been a very unpleasant task. Before he fled to the wilderness, his intention was to save the people of Israel, which was very good, but the way he chose to accomplish this was not right.

What Moses learned in the wilderness was that his strength was totally useless in his service to the Lord. Isaiah also deeply realized his own uselessness when he stood before the Lord. Jeremiah did the same thing. Paul was blinded by the light of the Lord on his way to Damascus and at the moment he came under the control of the Lord, he realized that all the education he had, his own strength or talent was completely valueless.

Faith that completely relies on the Lord, obedience, humbleness and patience; these things will never be obtained by reading books or listening to preaching. These things will be yours through nothing but the pain and agony you endure.

The rule behind the service is to accept the death of Jesus and His resurrection and experience it personally. What is required in the service of the Lord is not our innate ability or strength. The only power that helps us to serve the Lord and please Him is the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us.

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