

## Training of the Disciples, Part 1 of 2<sup>1</sup>

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Mark

4:35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

4:36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

4:37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

4:38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?

4:39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

4:40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?

4:41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

The most important thing in our lives is to become a child of God; in other words, to be saved. However, the salvation offered by the Bible is different from what is generally considered to be part of a happy life.

'Salvation' is true love, unremitting peace, and the 'righteousness' by which you can stand in front of God. 'Salvation' is overcoming the past, that is to say, accepting the forgiveness of our sins offered to us by the Lord Jesus, He who pays our debts.

What is it that can truly fill the empty part of humans? It is neither wealth, health, excellent education, honor, nor power. It is only for the very short period we live on this earth that all these things are well-accepted. What is most important is something truly everlasting. Only the Lord Jesus can make our lives eternally meaningful and valuable.

So what do we have to do to be saved?

We first have to come to see the Lord Jesus, confess everything like little children and repent all our sins. It is also important to pray as such: *Lord Jesus, please help me to repent from the bottom of my heart and to be transformed into totally new man. We will then feel compelled to give sincere thanks, saying, Lord Jesus, thank you very much. I am so grateful that you sacrificed yourself for me and paid my debt with your own precious blood, that you died to forgive and redeem my sins.*

Are you certain that all your debts have been paid, all your sins have been forgiven, and that you thus do not have to be tormented by a guilty conscience any longer? If you do not have this certainty at the foundation of your life, you are really missing 'the most important thing' in your life. When people truly experience the Lord Jesus, they will no longer be isolated: they will gain the certainty that the Lord Jesus is not only always with them, but that he lives for them and does everything he can to help them.

If people come to see the Lord Jesus the way they are right now, they will definitely be accepted and saved. The Lord urges those who have been saved to become his disciples and follow him. This is because the Lord wants to use us for his purposes. In order for us to be used by the Lord, we all have to be trained. Every training has its own purpose, its own procedure and its own consequence. Let's think about these three points in the following sections.

### 1. Purpose of the training

The Lord Jesus wants to show us what kind of man he is. It is not us who desired to be trained, but it is Jesus who desires to train us for his own purpose: to reveal Himself to us.

Do we truly recognize how insignificant we are? Have we experienced what it's like to be totally broken? To obtain faith, we needed to understand that we are heading towards destruction.

Isaiah

64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

It is written in Romans 3:10 that '*not even one person is righteous*'. To experience the salvation of the Lord Jesus, we first have to understand that there is a high wall which separates the righteousness of men and the righteousness of God. Many people try to practice the 'righteousness of men' by living ethical lives, instead of acting based on the 'righteousness of God'. One example of such a person is the man who appeared in the Chapter 22 of the Gospel according to Matthew, who was taken out of the wedding banquet because he did not wear wedding garments, but came in informal clothes.

The devil always tries to drive us down the wrong path by throwing dust in our eyes. The devil won't try to block believers from gathering at assemblies, studying the Bible or trying to accomplish something by their own efforts. It is possible that some believers, who consider themselves already saved, may not actually have been granted eternal life.

Matthew

7:22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

<sup>1</sup> 『弟子たちの教育(前編)』、主は生きておられる 27 号

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

7:23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The time will come when it is revealed to us that what we call the 'righteousness of men' is totally meaningless and valueless. Most people will be astonished and terrified when this occurs. This is the reason why it is absolutely necessary for us to keep asking whether our sins are truly forgiven, whether we have gained eternal life, and whether we have been proven to be 'the children of God' by the Holy Spirit himself.

For men to have true faith, they have to recognize the absolute difference between the righteousness of themselves and the righteousness of God. On the other hand, those who have once believed must understand that their own thoughts differ utterly from the thoughts of God.

Isaiah

55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Unfortunately, most believers are not aware of this fact. The Lord even said to the believers in the early churches that they were blind. It is no wonder that believers today cannot see it.

Revelation

3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

There are not many believers who are truly broken and contrite inside. Actually, there is nothing more important than this. The Lord chooses those brothers and sisters who deeply admit their uselessness and let them serve Him. You might think that you have something good in yourself, but this quality will never help you to serve the Lord – it will actually be an obstacle. Sometimes, the Lord has no choice but to inflict pain on us to make us see His glory, although He never wants to make us suffer. For the Lord to reveal His glory to us, our hearts have to be totally broken and we have to efface ourselves completely.

As we have just seen, the purpose of the training lies in the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself wants to reveal to us what kind of man He is. The purpose of His training is to make us clearly understand His intentions.

## 2. Process of the training

Everything which surrounds us is an instrument used to educate us. That is to say, all things in our lives cooperate with each other to affect and contribute to our training. Among other things, the Lord especially makes the best use of the words from the Bible in our education. The words of the Lord are not like the scientific papers - they are life itself.

Looking at the verses quoted at the beginning of this article, we can taste and recognize the great power of the words of the Lord. This world was created by the Lord Jesus, for the Lord Jesus. However, for our salvation, the Lord humbled Himself and lived on this world as one of us, among miserable humans. And while He lived on this earth, He revealed His authority a number of times. He stopped the storm and calmed the roaring wave to prove that even nature obeys His authority. As a human, Jesus sometimes felt tired and even took rests, but at the same time, He commanded natural phenomena as the 'Son of God' and made them obey him.

Needless to say, the most important process used in the education of disciples is intimate and spiritual conversation with the Lord Jesus. Communication is always the most fundamental procedure of the training. You can judge the character of a person by the kind of fellowship he or she possesses. People have various levels of fellowship, some of which distance them from the Lord and others which bring them closer.

Jesus had communion with His disciples. Through this communion His disciples were able to understand how great the authority of the Lord Jesus was. Thousands of impoverished people were given bread, the sick were healed and a dead man came back to life. The disciples knew the glory of the Lord Jesus when they saw on top of a high mountain that His appearance was changed. They further learned about the innocence of the Lord Jesus, His great love and meekness. By being touched by the character of Jesus personally, they understood the nature, intentions, mission and purpose of the Lord.

Just like the disciples, we too have to understand the intentions of the Lord Jesus, His will, His mission and His purpose. The Bible is given to us for this purpose. Today, we can neither see the face of Jesus, nor hear His voice, but the Bible is there for us. May that we understand the words of the Lord through our own experiences better and better each day.

Isaiah

66:2 ....to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

We always have to keep the words of God close to our hearts and allow these words to strengthen our faith. If we fail to do so, we will drift down the wrong path, get arrogant and eventually become an obstacle to the faith of other people. The Lord Jesus wants to reveal Himself through His words and let us understand His intentions in order to educate us.

As we can see from the verses cited at the beginning of this article, Jesus calmed the raging wave as a training lesson for His disciples. The disciples were fishermen, must have been familiar with the lake and must have crossed the lake a number of times since they were children. Although they were experienced fishermen, the raging wave scared them. It implies that the storm was violent beyond their imaginations. When the ship filled up with water they were all crippled with fear. They were frightened and at a complete loss as to what to do. But when the disciples saw that Jesus was still sleeping, they woke Him up and said accusingly,

"Teacher, don't you care that we're going to die?"

As humans, this attitude of the disciples seems natural, but they were not truly faithful when they cried out these words. When we have true faith, we only look up to Jesus spontaneously; all other things which our eyes can see have no more importance.

Abraham, in the Genesis, clearly indicated how true faith should be throughout his whole life.

#### Romans

4:18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations,



according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.

4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb:

4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

4:21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.

The disciples only saw what their eyes could see, the storm and the raging wave. This made them wonder whether Jesus really cared about them or not. They did not know the process that the Lord had used to let them profoundly understand His greatness.

Very often in our lives when we have a serious problem we become upset, lose our minds and do not know what to do. Don't we give up too often without extending our hands toward the Lord Jesus and asking for His help? Without understanding that the Lord Jesus is standing behind all these ordeals, we are prone to curse our fate and give in to despair. When we encounter unexpected incidents, disasters or things we can't understand at all, we should remember this fact: the Lord never wants to punish us, He allows these things to happen as instruments to train us. It is not punishment. He lets these difficult things happen to us to help us recover our faith and be transformed into the image of the Lord Jesus. What we call pain and agony are not there just to make us suffer; they are the instruments necessary for us to better understand the Lord Jesus. After all, the problem is not in pain, agony or sickness themselves, but in the wrong attitude our minds have against them, that makes us feel so unfree and miserable.

Paul said in his letter to the Romans that "*they even boast in their sufferings*" (5:3). Watchman Nee once said, "*Lord, please bless me with pains and pangs to suffer*". If we are suffering from various problems and difficulties, they are never punishments; they are proof of Lord Jesus' love and compassion toward us.

### 3. Consequence of the training

Finally, let's consider the consequences of the training. So far, we have seen that the disciples were always filled with anxiety and fear. We also saw, on the other hand, how the Lord Jesus acted at the same time. In the great storm, the Lord kept sleeping quietly. When the disciples were panicked and didn't know what to do, the Lord was just calm and resting in the arms of His Father God. When the disciples woke Him up, Jesus rebuked the wind, and "*told the sea to calm down and be still. Then the wind stopped blowing, and there was a great calm*", so says Mark 4:39. The words of the Lord Jesus

changed the violent windstorm to a great calm. The violent windstorm, the words of the Lord and the great calm; this was the order in which these things occurred.

The Lord is always the same, yesterday, today and forever. The Lord is willing to exercise His great power for us. The important thing is whether the Lord Jesus can talk to us. Are we prepared to listen to His words, just like Samuel was when he said, "*Speak, Lord, because your servant is listening*", in the First Samuel 3:9?

What did the disciples learn from this great storm? They learned about the guidance and the strength of the Lord Jesus. They were totally dismayed by this storm, which was not an accident, but something through which the Lord planned to train them. It was the Lord Jesus, who said to them, "Let's cross to the other side." And it was on their way to the other side of the lake that they fell on this big disaster. However, in all troubles or sufferings, the Lord is always there with us. The words of the Lord are full of strength, and can calm any storm. The disciples needed to learn this greatness of the Lord.

We too may encounter some serious disaster or difficult situation someday. We may lose ourselves in panic and feel as if we are going to be crushed by the high wave. Even when these things happen and there seems to be nothing we can do, the words of the Lord Jesus are always there to calm down everything.

Isaiah

41:10 Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

43:1 But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

If we just incline our ears to these words of the Lord, our troubled minds will be calmed.

### Three Storms

To conclude this article, let's look at the three storms in the Bible, which were sent to three loyal servants of the Lord; Job, Jonah and Paul.

[a] The Storm that Job experienced.

Job

1:19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead.

The great wind instantly killed all seven sons and three daughters of Job. We know that this great wind was the work of the devil, and the Lord gave the devil permission to do this. The devil cannot do all he wishes using his own will. Even the devil is merely used by the Lord to accomplish His purpose. The Lord God governs the whole world.

The storm took from Job his wealth, properties, fame, and status. Furthermore, he lost all his children, friends, as well as his wife, who had supported him for many years. However, through these ordeals, Job received a great blessing: he came to understand himself and the Lord better.

Job

42:5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

42:6 Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.

42:10 ...the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

We have to understand that when the Lord takes away something important from us, even though it seems totally unreasonable at the time we are promised to receive much greater blessings at a later time.

[b] The Storm that Jonah experienced.

Jonah

1:4 But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.

It was the Lord Himself who sent this storm. The people in the ship were totally terrified. They believed that their lives were going to end and "*each man cried out to his gods*" as described in Jonah 1:5. With this storm, the purpose of the Lord was to restore the faith of Jonah, who dared to turn his face away from the Lord and turned his back to Him. Today, there are still so many believers who are trying to evade the eyes of the Lord. However, all kinds of ordeals are brought about, not as punishment, but to take all believers running away from the Lord back into His hands.

Fortunately, Jonah had the blessing of the Lord and came back to Him. He served the Lord to spread God's words, which eventually made thousands of people repent and become saved.

[c] The Storm that Paul experienced.

Paul experienced so many storms and was disciplined through various ordeals. He served out his life as a disciple. This can be seen in the next few verses:

#### 2 Corinthians

11:23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

11:26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

After he experienced all of these 'storms', Paul could finally say, "*I have been crucified with the Messiah. I no longer live, but the Messiah lives in me*", as he wrote in Galatians 2:20. He said, "this world is dead for me and it has become meaningless. I also died as far as this world is concerned. I no longer live, but the Lord Jesus lives in me".

In addition, Paul was caught in the violent storm, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. "*For a number of days neither the sun nor the stars were to be seen, and the storm continued to rage until at last all hope of our being saved vanished*" (Acts 27:20). This implies that a vicious rainstorm continued for many days. Two hundred seventy six people on board were in a totally desperate condition. They were adrift in the darkness for fourteen days without anything to eat. Even in this absolutely desperate situation, Paul, who had been captive, not being scared or anxious at all, stood firm on his feet among them just like a king glaring at his enemies and said,

#### Acts

27:22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer.

27:34 for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

Paul was perfectly certain when he totally relied on the Lord. The Lord wants us to overcome all our troubles and sufferings and stand firm as Paul did.