

The Mission of Christians 1 – The Purpose of Salvation

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The most important thing in our lives is to have the Savior. It is to know the Lord Jesus from experience. David, who experienced the God of Salvation, said, “The Lord is my strength and protector, for he has become my deliverer” (Psalm 118:14). Isaiah also said, “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” (Isaiah 12:2). Then Mary said, “My soul praises the greatness of the Lord! My spirit exults in God, my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).

It is not until we know the God of Salvation that we can live 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” and the “certainty” that the Lord Jesus cares about us, leads us and protects us. In particular, there is no treasure like the conviction that we will have eternal fellowship with the Lord and eventually share in His glory. When we think of becoming one with the Lord forever, we are compelled to worship Him. This eternal glory can be attained only by knowing the Lord and being reborn into new life. This makes us realize the importance of regeneration for our lives.

1 Peter 2:2

Like newborn babies, thirst for the pure milk of the word so that by it you may grow in your salvation. [International Standard Version]

Growth

The Bible implies that Christians right after their rebirth are like “little children”. Babies are not supposed to remain as babies forever. Rather, they are expected to grow up. Nevertheless, Paul had to make brothers and sisters in Corinth realize this:

1 Corinthians 3:2

I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, because you weren't ready for it. And you're still not ready!

To the brothers and sisters in Corinth, Paul had to act just like a mother who can feed her new baby nothing but milk. Although milk is easily digestible, it only can be used to form the “foundation” of salvation. Brothers

and sisters in Corinth were not ready to understand the same profound and noble truth that was presented earlier to the brothers and sisters in other cities, such as Ephesus and Colossae. The ultimate goal of Paul was to enable brothers and sisters to attain “mature adulthood” instead of babysitting them forever. He wrote:

Ephesians 4:13-15

until all of us are united in the faith and in the full knowledge of God's Son, and until we attain mature adulthood and the full standard of development in the Messiah. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed like waves and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, or by clever strategies that would lead us astray. Instead, by speaking the truth in love, we will grow up completely and become one with the head, that is, one with the Messiah,

It is surely a wonderful blessing to have a savior. However, it is not enough. What is essential for us is to be placed in the hands of the Lord Jesus so that the Lord controls us at every aspect of our lives. For us who come to know the Lord Jesus by his mercy and grace, to grow as vessels to serve the Lord Jesus it is essential to understand Jesus by experience more profoundly as our “Lord.”

Therefore, believers of the Lord have to constantly obey him so that every act in their lives is used for the good of the Lord Jesus. We need to understand correctly “the purpose and missions of the Christian's life”, which is to live through anything to “be crowned for eternal victory.”

Battle of the Faith

The New Testament compares athletic contests held in this world with the spiritual battle for the faith of believers. This is done to offer encouragement to us. So, I would like to discuss about athletics contests in Greece and Rome in those times. In Greece at that time, it was believed that “a sound mind dwells in a sound body.” Men and women who were trained in physical exercises since their childhood were blessed with beautiful and healthy bodies when they reached adulthood. We can see this from sculptures left over from those times. Linguistically speaking, the Greek words for “good thing” and “beautiful thing” were derived from the same word origin. While goodness and beauty were purely objective in Greece, in Rome, political strength and authority were idealized. Although these two nations had different ideal goals, they shared the common idea that their goals would be accomplished through sports.

However, in Greece and Rome, sports were always connected with idol worship. For example, Olympic games were initiated for the purpose of praising and worshipping the god Zeus. At the center of Olympia stood the altar to Zeus, and when all competitions were over, athletes marched spectacularly toward the altar. Near Corinth, the athletes' competitions were held to praise Poseidon, the god of the sea. There was another athletic game to worship the god of the sun, Apollo. In Rome, they had a practice where they would circle around in the stadium pulling carts laden with statues of various idols of gods before the competition began.

Although athletic competitions in those days were connected with idol worship, Paul never gave in to such social conventions. Instead, he used these competitions that were familiar to the people of Rome and Greece as an analogy for a plain explanation of a faithful life. When the gospel is preached to explain that the Lord Jesus is "salvation" itself and his presence is nothing but the manifestation of the strength of the Lord God, the Lord Jesus reveals himself and the darkness is completely defeated. Paul experienced this and wrote:

Romans 1:16

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who believes, of the Jew first and of the Greek as well.

We should not forget that the strength of the gospel only appears when we are united with the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us (so that this strength is endowed upon us). The important thing for us is to entrust everything to the Lord Jesus. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we will fight out the war and win the victory. We have to run as fast as possible to obtain the promised crown of victory with the help of his strength. We need to run to accomplish the purpose of the Lord using the strength granted by the Lord Jesus. The lives of saved people should not be like "taking a stroll in a park" anymore, for it has to be the "struggle to win the crown of victory." We have to fight out this battle, not depending on our own human ability, but on the strength granted from above by the grace and mercy of the Lord.

Why does the New Testament refer to the athletic competitions of Greek and Roman times so often? It is to teach us that "just believing in Jesus and being saved" is not enough—we were given the goal to win in our everlasting war, and this is what is most important for us.

We have to trust in the Lord Jesus much more deeply than we do now and entrust Him with everything. We

ought to keep obeying the Lord, sincerely, and should be filled with joy. We have to be prepared to serve as the witnesses of the Lord. So, let us continue running toward the goal and endeavor to win the prize that the Lord has prepared for us; the prize that takes us up to the Lord Jesus.

Everything in this world is transient and fragile. There is only one thing that is eternal, and it remains forever. We have to aim at the eternal truth and set our minds together. To fight this "battle of faith" we have to be determined to spend all spiritual energies granted to us and dedicate everything to the Lord.

The goal we are heading toward is filled with amazing glory. If we devote our whole life to serving him as the loyal servants of the Lord, we will be richly rewarded. Faithful people are granted enough spiritual power by the living Lord Jesus. Let us run by the strength of the Lord to reach the "crown of victory."

Struggle

The Lord Jesus provides us with courage to testify boldly, conviction in our faith, and the definite victory. The life of Christians is like a "struggle," so to speak. It is a war against the evil spirit. Paul mentioned:

Ephesians 6:10-17

Finally, be strong in the Lord, relying on his mighty strength. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the devil's strategies. 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.

For this reason, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to take a stand whenever evil comes. And when you have done everything you could, you will be able to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having fastened the belt of truth around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and being firm-footed in the gospel of peace. In addition to having clothed yourselves with these things, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one, also take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Lives of Christians, as I said before, can be compared to races in athletic stadiums.

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do

not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

We have to fight the spiritual battle against various powers in this world. In this battle, our mission is to capture the devil's stronghold.

2 Corinthians 10:4-6

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete.

It is true to say that those who are saved by grace are all “runners” and “warriors.”

2 Timothy 2:3

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

In other words, to serve the Lord Jesus is to fight the “sacred war.” Those who are determined to stand firm as servants and witness to the Lord Jesus will never fail to understand the significance of this battle. When we desire to walk with Jesus, we are always exposed to vicious attacks from deniers of the faith. It is in the nature of those who refuse to accept the Lord Jesus—that is to say, the innate nature of all humans. They speak with one voice: “We do not want the Lord Jesus to reign over us.”

Luke 19:14

But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’

Internal Warfare

In our warfare of faith, enemies do not always come from the outside. There is an internal struggle within us, too. When referring to internal warfare, the word “sanctification” is often used. This refers to the process in which we humans decrease and the presence of the Lord Jesus increases. In this way, all “old things” will eventually be gone and “new things” will be brought in instead.

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

All saved brothers and sisters have both an “old nature” and “new nature” within themselves, which cannot co-exist but are actually in opposition to each other. This is mentioned in the Bible:

Galatians 5:17

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

This internal warfare will continue and never cease as long as our flesh exists. Unfortunately, inside most saved people, these two natures actually “compromise” with each other rather than opposing each other, so that people admit the existence of two different natures within them and get used to the situation. As a result, they become insensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The weakness of their minds deprive them of the strength to testify and make them worry about worldly matters. Thus, their supreme desires and hopes are obscured.

Needless to say, it is easier to break away from this life of indecisiveness if you try as early as possible, and it should be done as thoroughly as possible. Those who are redeemed by the shed blood of the Lord should always live as athletes.

2 Timothy 2:5

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

The rules of competition mentioned in this verse refer to the various restrictions that have to be obeyed strictly. For instance, if you participate in a marathon race but take a short cut instead of running on the designated course, you will never receive the crown of victory, even if you “reach” the goal. In our battle of faith, we cannot fight unless we totally trust in the Lord Jesus and entrust everything in our lives to Him. The Lord Jesus will never accept any compromise at all. It is important that our “old nature” and “new nature” are never mixed up within us. It has to be absolutely avoided. This war is extremely serious. We have to stick to our “unshakable faith” in the Lord Jesus and keep obeying the Lord.

Acts 11:23

When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose,

These things can be regarded as the “responsibilities” that Christians have to uphold in their lives of faith once they surrender to the Lord. Although the importance of making your own decision is unquestioned, it is not right to attempt to win the glory or to overcome your old nature by your own might without relying on the strength of the Lord. So how can we tell when brothers and sisters truly belong to the Lord?

Firstly, they come to love the Bible, which consists of the words of the Lord.

Secondly, they seek fellowship with brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Thirdly, they offer prayers of thanks and plead to the Lord in all aspects of their lives.

Fourthly, they stay away from things and persons that are obviously evil.

This is what happens when the Lord Jesus wins the victory for them.

Unfortunately, many brothers and sisters are busy looking after themselves and seeking worldly love. Consequently, they become indifferent or closed-minded to other people. They have not experienced the strength of lively prayers, and therefore their testimonies do not get into our hearts. They do not pay respect to the words of the Lord and, as a result, they easily give in to sin. Is there a way to get out of this state? If the Lord Jesus has won the victory within us, we must already have overcome the power of sin.

Nehemiah 8:10

And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

The joy of the Lord is your strength. In fact, we are empowered to win the victory only when we rejoice in the Lord and praise him in our daily lives. If we look up to the Lord Jesus, obey the Lord Jesus and stay with the Lord Jesus, we will truly gain victory over our sins. Consequently, we will be able to walk in the light, filled with joy. In order to win the crown of victory, we should avoid taking a half-hearted and ambiguous attitude to the Lord Jesus. It is important for us to make a strenuous attempt to entrust everything to him and rely on the Lord Jesus.

To Receive the Crown of Victory

Finally, what kind of people deserve to receive the crown of the victory? Paul mentioned:

1 Thessalonians 2:19

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

Brothers and sisters in Thessaloniki—who are referred to as “you” in this verse—were not only led to the Lord through Paul, but by the grace of the Lord they thrived and finally bore rich fruits. In that sense, Paul was very proud of them.

Daniel 12:3

And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

By way of contrast, would any Christians be crowned for victory if they have never led anyone to the Lord? It is absolutely impossible.

Athletic competitions in ancient Rome and Greece gathered large audiences. It is said that in the time of Paul, an audience of around 250,000 gathered in the Roman Coliseum, called the “circus,” and even more people came in the fourth century, when there were as many as 385,000. In contrast, we should not forget that our battle of faith is not only being watched by people around us, but is also under the gaze of the Lord Jesus, as well as all of the other residents of the invisible world.

Combat sport in ancient Roman times changed from wrestling between humans to physical fighting between beasts and humans. For example, fighting with lions was originated as a punishment for criminals, but later, in the time of Nero, it came to be inflicted upon believers of the Lord Jesus. In the most gruesome cases, they did not hesitate to impose cruel punishment, such as pouring oil on believers of the Lord and setting them on fire.

In chapter 16 of his epistle to the Romans, Paul mentioned many names of brothers and sisters, and described their works. For example, “...who work with me for the Messiah Jesus” in verses 3 and 9; “...my dear friend in the Lord” in verses 5, 8, 9 and 12; “... who are in prison with me” in verse 7; “...who has been approved by the Messiah” in verse 10; and “... the one chosen by the Lord” in verse 13. Most of the brothers and sisters mentioned were undoubtedly persecuted and slaughtered, as Paul was. Six years after this “epistle to the Romans” was written, broad persecution began against the brothers and sisters who accepted the Lord, mainly in Rome. However, in spite of such fierce persecution, these Christians didn’t fear death at all. Instead, they accepted their

suffering humbly, filled with the joy of belief in the Lord.

On the other hand, some Christians abandoned their faith in fear of persecution or death. For example, it is recorded in some ancient writings that to avoid fierce persecution in the time of the Emperor Decius, a 72-year-old man yielded to the emperor's order and worshipped an idol. This implies that this man obeyed human authority rather than the Lord Jesus. As a result, he compromised with this world and let down his faith. Roman officials of these times witnessed this old man worshipping idols. What a terrible tragedy it was if what was recorded in this old document is true. Some Christians denied Jesus and chose to compromise with this world to save their lives. They went so far as to worship idols in the presence of the officials and asked them to bear witness to their conversion. How does this relate to the testimony of Christians living today? How will our Christian faith be acknowledged? Jesus explained it this way:

[Matthew 10:32-33](#)

So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

The only mission of all the brothers and sisters who choose to belong to the Lord Jesus is to testify of the Lord Jesus. As the presence of the Lord Jesus grows stronger within us, we will feel more compelled to testify about the Lord Jesus faithfully. This implies that our testimonies totally depend on the relationship between Jesus and us. As we are filled with the Holy Spirit more and more, we will be impelled to proclaim our gratitude and joy at being saved to as many people as we can.

We have to clearly recognize what the Lord Jesus means to each one of us. Any Christian can testify once they truly belong to the Lord Jesus. 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, that is the time that we begin to testify the Lord Jesus boldly, filled with gratitude and joy.

However, testimony of Him always leads to battle. We move forward on the road of faith through struggle and devotion, and it is a life of victory filled with magnificent glory. We who belong to faith will bear rich fruits when we entrust everything to the Lord.

We should not forget that faith always takes us to the

road to the cross. It is only the fellowship with the Lord Jesus, who experienced death on the cross and the resurrection that provides us with faith and sanctification, as well as the strength to testify. The Lord Jesus once said, "You are my witnesses." Are we truly acting as "witnesses?" Do we faithfully testify to our family, at school or work, and in our hometown? To be true witnesses, we need to be filled with strength, courage, wisdom and love. Not until we entrust everything to the Lord and lead a life of testimony for him as the ones who belong to the Lord Jesus will we qualify to live with the Lord and die for the Lord. Without continuously testifying the Lord Jesus faithfully in our everyday life, we would never be able to entrust everything to the Lord and obey him, especially when we face difficult situations or inevitable ordeals.