

[1] What does the Bible say? Part 6.

Why don't you believe? Answering to 14 Questions 2.

Unser Herr lebt 18

Gotthold Beck

『主は生きておられる』18号に掲載された、『聖書は何と言っていますか第6回、あなたはなぜ信じないのですか? - 十四の質問に答える(下)』を英訳したものです。

In the previous issue, we discussed six of fourteen reasons some people do not believe in Jesus. Today, let's think about the next eight.

7. I will be persecuted for having faith.

What the flesh wants is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to the flesh. Because of this, Jesus' believers are persecuted in a world dominated by darkness. Suffering for Jesus is a privilege allowed to believers. They are permitted to walk in the footsteps of the Lord and follow Him. For believers who have been saved by the Lord and obtained everlasting life, the only way to serve Jesus is to overcome the fear of persecution and follow the Lord. The Lord is looking for someone like that.

John

15:19 If you were of the world, the world would love his own. but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. if they have kept my saying. they will keep yours also.

Matthew

10:38 And he that takes not his cross, and follows after me, is not worthy of me.

Paul made it very clear.

2Timothy

3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

If you are free from all trouble or anguish and there is no friction in your life, even though you believe in the Lord you may actually have to question the truthfulness of your faith. It may be because you have compromised with other people. What should be the most critical thing in our lives when we have faith? When you refuse to compromise with this world and make it a top priority to serve the Lord, you will go through various conflicts and confrontations. In this respect, the attitude of the members of the early churches was so impeccable. They were troubled by so many things, but they were not afraid. They looked up and saw the Lord's promises clearly. So, they were not surprised at all when they faced fierce persecution. Because the believers of the early churches served the Lord with an attitude like this, they were well-used by the Lord and Jesus blessed them. The firm convictions of these apostles can be found in the following verses:

Romans

8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Acts

5:40 And to him they agreed. and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

5:41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

2Timothy

2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him(Jesus). if we deny him, he also will deny us.

Acts

14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

In this world, it is no wonder that believers have to experience anguish and suffering. The important thing is knowing how to react to these troubles and pains. It is your attitude toward the Lord regarding the troubles you experience that will decide whether you will attain victory or end in miserable defeat. To attain victory, you will need to recognize two things. First is that your troubles and difficult situations will never last forever; second is that today's sufferings are not worthy of comparison with the glory that will be revealed to us in the future. It is not acceptable for us to be tied up in a reality which eyes can see.

Matthew

5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:11 Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad. for great is your reward in heaven. for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Mark

8:35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.

8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation. Of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

What is the attitude expected from those who have obtained salvation from the Lord? In simple terms, it is to look up to Jesus all the time and think about Him. Thinking of Jesus will bring you strength in any occasion.

Hebrew

12:2 Looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.

1Peter

2:20 For what glory is it, if, when you be buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

2:21 For even hereunto were you called. because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps:

8. You will be put into a difficult position by believing in the Lord.

Sunflowers do not bloom in winter. Likewise, sometimes true believers of God are forced into very difficult situations, in this world dominated by people who refuse to obey the Lord God. However, this does not mean that the followers of the Lord are all destined to be harmed and suffer in this world. Actually, the Lord's believers are always controlled and protected by Him, and the most wonderful blessings are prepared for them. There is nothing impossible for the Lord God, He who is honest and sincere. So, you have to understand that the Lord wants to enter the hearts of all believers and remove the obstacles to their spiritual growth, leaving better things in their place. The Lord God helps us to gain a better reputation in ways we cannot even imagine.

Matthew

19:29 And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.

Matthew

6:33 But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. and all these things shall be added to you.

Mark

8:36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

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9. The Lord is unfair and scary.

Impressions like this come from very a superficial understanding of the facts. Some people blame God for being unfair, claiming that He allows wars, famine, earthquakes or disasters to happen. They also consider it unfair that some people have to suffer from serious diseases while others are given better abilities or looks than others. They also claim that the Lord lets some impermissible things happen and thus, that He is scary. However, it is very dangerous and arrogant to bring accusations against the Lord God. Having conflict with the Lord only leads to harm. It is certainly an evil deed that devil worshipers want to do. Very often, the Lord God has to use a whip to draw us near to Him and save us.

Romans

9:20 Nay but, Oh man, who are you that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it. Why has you made me thus?

Job

40:2 Shall he that contends with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproves God, let him answer it.

Hebrew

12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to children. My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him:

12:6 For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.

12:7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. for what son is he whom the father chastens not?

The Lord God is so righteous, that he had to sacrifice his only begotten son, the Lord Jesus, to resolve us of our sins. Jesus willingly suffered for us and our sins. This fact is inspired in Isaiah, chapter 53. It is more important than anything to recognize the depth of your sins and the love of Jesus. When you understand these facts, you will then clearly realize how stupid and arrogant it is to murmur to the Lord and question the Lord's intentions.

Isaiah

53:3 He is despised and rejected of men. a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. and we hid as it were our faces from him. he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah

53:5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. the chastisement of our peace was upon him. and with his stripes we are healed.

10. I can't forgive someone.

When you cannot forgive someone, it is because you do not want to forgive them. Refusing to forgive humiliation is a dreadful thing. It will only cause anxiety in your mind.

Habakkuk

2:4 Look, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him. but the just shall live by his faith.

If you do not obey the Lord's command of forgiveness, the Lord will have to abandon you.

Romans

1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

1:31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Matthew

6:15 But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

1John

3:15 Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer. and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

11. It is too late for me to be saved.

Some people feel this way for different reasons. For example, some people are severely mentally depressed or physically ill. Others make meaningless and wrong efforts to obtain blessings, or simply do not understand salvation. However, the true reason is this: it is the whisper of the devil that keeps telling them it is already too late, the devil who wants to keep them away from salvation. If you lend your ears to this whisper, you will start to feel that the Lord has already thrown you out. However, the Lord will never throw you out. It is never too late. At any time, anyone can be accepted if they just humble themselves and pray to the Lord. This is such a wonderful truth. So, let's not hesitate to step in front of the Lord.

John

6:37 All that the Father gives me shall come to me. and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out.

Psalms

102:16 When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

102:17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

Isaiah

1:18 Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord. though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah

42:3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench. he shall bring forth judgment to truth.

Romans

5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

2Corinthians

6:2look, now is the accepted time. look, now is the day of salvation.

Now is the accepted time. Now we are presented with the opportunity to repent and to accept salvation. It is never too late to repent.

2Peter

3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness. but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Revelation

22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hearkens say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

What is salvation after all? Is it an oath to God that you will make every effort to change yourself? If so, the Lord would throw you out if you committed the same sin again after repentance. If this is what they call repentance, it is understandable that some people are afraid to take the steps toward repentance, because they are not comfortable. What is salvation after all? We can understand what it is by looking at some real-life examples of repentance in the Bible.

Luke

23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying. If you be Christ, save thyself and us.

23:40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying. do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?

23:41 And we indeed justly. for we receive the due reward of our deeds. but this man has done nothing amiss.

23:42 And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

23:43 And Jesus said to him. Verily I say to you, To day shalt you be with me in paradise.

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12. There are bad examples among believers.

We cannot deny this fact. We have all seen so many believers who have become bad examples in many aspects. There are so many people all over the world today who claim to be Christians but have never actually have experienced true repentance, and thus have never experienced the real salvation of Jesus. Such examples can be found even among the so-called clergy.

Those believers who have still not experienced true repentance are driven by the lust of worldly things and easily compromise with everything. In fact, they do not even realize that they have made compromises. Sometimes, when these people begin to believe and seek the Lord, they stumble over these kinds of self-appointed believers. However, the existence of such bad examples does not prove the incompleteness of the salvation of the Lord, and should not be a reason to reject the Lord's salvation. Sometimes plants die because of insects, even though there is enough rain. But this does not imply that rain is not required for the growth of plants. People cannot be truly saved until they sincerely repent.

2Corinthians

5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.

When you look at other believers and accuse them for being bad examples, how does it reflect on you? The important thing is not to look at how others behave, but to look at yourself. The next few verses remind us of the importance of reflecting your own deeds.

Matthew

7:1 Judge not, that you be not judged.

7:2 For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

7:3 And why behold you the mote that is in your brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in your own eye?

7:4 Or how wilt you say to your brother. Let me pull out the mote out of your eye. and, look, a beam is in your own eye?

7:5 You hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of your own eye. and then shalt you see clearly to cast out the mote out of your brother's eye.

Only our Lord God is absolutely righteous. He is the only one who can judge us. We are all imperfect in His eyes and are not qualified to judge each other. This is especially true after we believe in Jesus and become saved. We all take some part of Jesus' body. Thus, we have to keep in mind that when we accuse our brothers and sisters, we are accusing Jesus Himself.

Romans

2:1 Therefore you are inexcusable, Oh man, whosoever you are that judge. for wherein you judge another, you condemn thyself. for you that judge do the same things.2:2 But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.

2:3 And think you this, Oh man, that judge them which do such things, and do the same, that you shalt escape the judgment of God?

2:4 Or despise you the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

2:5 But after your hardness and impenitent heart treasure up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

2:6 Who will render to every man according to his deeds:

13. Some parts of the Bible are very difficult to understand.

This is true. As we can see from what Jesus mentioned in John 6:63, “*the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*”, the Bible is not just a book written based on humans' conceptions or speculations. It was created from the inspiration of the Lord, our God. So, the Bible is not very straightforward for anyone. Only when you commit your full attention will the Holy Spirit guide you to the true voice of the Lord God. This is especially true for people who have not changed since they were born, and thus are not connected to the Lord; they would never understand the Bible at all, for they are spiritually blind. However, if they open their hearts and face the Bible, they too can hear the words of God.

1Corinthians

2:14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. for they are foolishness to him. neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

2Corinthians

4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4:4 In whom the god of this world(=devil) has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them.

Daniel

12:10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried. but the wicked shall do wickedly. and none of the wicked shall understand. but the wise shall understand.

Any efforts to understand the Bible using your intelligence or mental knowledge will be irrelevant and meaningless. This is because the thoughts of the Lord differ completely from the thoughts of humans.

Matthew

11:25 At that time Jesus answered and said. I thank you, Oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you has hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them to babes.

11:26 Even so, Father. for so it seemed good in your sight.

It is very often the case that even the thoughts or intentions of the most obedient believers are totally dissociated from the thoughts or intentions of the Lord God. The next verse was written for such believers.

Isaiah

55:8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says 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.

The Bible is not something to 'understand'. We read it to listen to the words, the words that Jesus still tells us today. Very often, these words lead readers to prayer. The Bible is given to us so that we can follow the words of the Lord.

1Samuel

3:9 Speak, Lord. for your servant hearkens.

If you face the Bible with an attitude like Samuel, you will have the promise of the Lord, as in the following verses:

Psalms

119:18 Open you mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

James

1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not. and it shall be given him.

1Corinthians

1:30 But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

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14. There are many inconsistencies in the Bible.

Some people insist that there are inconsistencies in the Bible. However, most of the time these are ready-made opinions, just repetitions of what someone else has said. Some people do not want to accept the Bible as the word of God, so they emphasize the inconsistencies in the Bible. Although there are, in fact, so many things in the Bible we cannot fully understand, there is nothing inconsistent. Some verses exist in the bible specifically for those who insist on its inconsistencies:

1Timothy

1:7 Desiring to be teachers of the law. understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

2Peter

2:12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not. and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

Romans

1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

The Bible is made up of the words that God gave to us.

Psalms

119:40 Look. I have longed after your precepts. quicken me in your righteousness.

Psalms

12:6 The words of the Lord are pure words. as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Proverbs

30:5 Every word of God is pure. he is a shield to them that put their trust in him.

2Peter

1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy. whereunto you do well that you take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

Conclusion

We have looked at some of the reasons why people who do not know about salvation through Jesus hesitate to have faith. Some of these reasons are totally based on misunderstanding. For example, some people believe that they have to change themselves to be saved. There are other kinds of reasons that are based on facts but do not necessarily have to be obstacles in the way of faith. "Bad examples among believers" is one of such reasons. After all, the only important thing is that we always return to what the Bible says. If you keep asking what the Bible says about anything, you will eventually reach the truth. However, if you try to find your own answers to your questions and value the judgement of the society or thoughts of others instead of the Bible, and if you read the Bible to find the conclusion you want, you will never reach the truth, and thus, you will never overcome your sins.

The Bible contains the true words of God and should not be treated as a subject of study or research. If you truly seek 'Life in Christ', there is no other way to achieve it than walking toward Jesus with an honest mind, listening to His words in the Bible and relying on Him. The very first

words Jesus said to the people were in Mark 1:15: "*Repent, and keep believing the gospel*" (i.e. the Bible). What went through Jesus' mind on the cross, the words that the Lord gave us when he was resurrected, everything is concentrated in this very verse. Faith without repentance is like a flower that has no root. It may look wonderful and attractive, but it will never bear fruit.

Furthermore, repentance is impossible without faith. It is merely 'regret'. It is just like someone moving up and down or going around forever on a prettily decorated merry-go-round. These people may seem so religious, but in reality they are just turning in place and will never move forward. Only when your faith is accompanied by repentance will you have the blessing of the Holy Spirit of Jesus and bear true fruit.

Jesus loved us and sacrificed Himself on the cross for our sins. Only Jesus is the way to truth and life. When we come to Jesus, eternal life in Christ is promised to us. This promise gives us something we can never find in this world. It is a joy and hope that will never fade away under any circumstance. In fact, true believers will see a new and different person in themselves. What we receive from Jesus is not something to be added to an inventory of other things we already have. It is true life given to us, we who have been heading toward the path of destruction. It is a new creation. It is important for you to believe in salvation and receive it so that you do not miss this wonderful blessing that the Lord God provides you for free.

End