



Pathfinder

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The Necessity of Repentance to Salvation

Luke 15:10

Pastor Jed B. Raquintan

Hearing a sinner get saved brings joy in the abode of God. God desires no sinner to go to Hell (2 Peter 3:9). Thus, He provided the way for sinners to be delivered from sin's penalty. He sent His only begotten Son – Jesus Christ to die on the cross to act as the sinner's substitute. Consequently, a sinner can appropriate the divine provision for his sin's deliverance from eternal damnation. To receive this privilege of eternal salvation, the sinner must recognize his sinfulness by repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the biblical truth for salvation.

As some teachers and preachers desire the salvation of more sinners, they revised the divine plan of receiving the gift of salvation. They de-emphasized the need of sinner's repentance. Repentance is a change of one's mind. It is a turning from that which is wrong towards that which is right. Modern preachers are making the biblical salvation offer more "acceptable" even to sinners who do not recognize wrongdoing. A repentant one will abhor the past error and sinful lifestyle upon seeing the truth.

Soul-winners have employed sales techniques in gospel presentation. They made the message of salvation so easily acceptable even without repentance. Then those who made professions are swiftly declared as "saved" by the soul-winner. The latter would not seek for evidences of a truly converted life. Thus, these "saved" folks could enter the body of Christ without true Spirit-wrought regeneration. Some of them would be conforming to the manner of church life as they become church members without the fact of genuine conversion. Further, the local church may have good additional statistics yet it is weakened by false additions. For who really adds people into the body of Christ? Consider Acts 2:41, 47!

Prominent in practicing this falsity are the independent Baptists. This group is either new evangelical or fundamental in persuasion. They are strong in implementing this view of sidelining repentance in gospel presentation and reception. They even redefined repentance and considered it as mere mental admission of the fact of sin. The passages and biblical truths presented below will attempt to answer this prevalent error deceiving people into false salvation thereby weakening local churches.

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First, John the Baptist preached repentance. Consider Matthew 3:1-2. He commanded those who come to him for immersion in water to produce evidences of their repentance prior to public immersion. We see this in Luke 3:8-14. So John affirmed that the validity of repentance lies in its outward evidences of a changed life. He rejected the peoples' claim of spiritual lineage and association with the prophets and forefathers. Abraham's descendants must turn away from sinful ways before he would baptize them even if they claim belief in the Messiah.

Second, the Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly preaching ministry preached repentance. Consider Matthew 4:17ff. He commanded people to repent. He expected them to act on His call to repentance. His disciples repented from their former sinful ways. He affirmed Zaccheus' conversion and salvation (Luke 19:9) as He saw his repentant heart (Luke 19:7-8). He required it with Levi the publican in Matthew 9:9-13 prior to his following Him. This corrupt publican ceased from ungodly practices and committed to follow the Savior. Even the man of Gadara after conversion was also changed from sinful ways.

Third, Christ included repentance in His initial mandate to the church. See Matthew 10:1-7. Although the text did not categorically state repentance, its presence in Luke 24:46-47, in the final mandate to the church, validates this supposition. Note that what Christ received (Matthew 3:1-2) from John the Baptist He also imparted to His disciples. Since the mandate of the church or also known as the Great Commission includes repentance then the church must keep it until His return to earth.

Fourth, Christ illustrated the need to repent through parabolic teaching such as in Luke 15:11-32. The prodigal son after wasting the inherited wealth from his father and experiencing miserable life outside his father's domain changed his mind. Hence, he repented from such base and immoral life-style. He turned away from his chosen depraved life course. He returned to his father's abode and attendant privileges. Note that the Father also received him well with rejoicing (vv. 27ff.).

Fifth, Apostle Peter preached the message of repentance to a large audience in Jerusalem. We see this in Acts 2:38 where he commandingly told the listeners to change their life course towards receiving sin's forgiveness. Similar with John the Baptist's message such repentance will result in submission to water baptism. It is not to receive forgiveness of sins rather on account of sin's forgiveness already received. Later in his ministry, he would speak against the departure from sound doctrine in his epistle (see 2 Peter 2:1-3).

Sixth, Apostle Paul in his farewell sermon to the church elders in Ephesus reiterated what he has been preaching in Acts 20:21. He was merely reminding these church elders on what he has taught them in the past. The context was one of exhortation to remain in sound soteriological doctrine. He did this reminder (v. 31) to make them aware of the coming false teachers (v. 29) who will mislead them or their church members. This apostolic prediction has been fulfilled in previous and current generations.

Lastly, God urged some of the seven pastors and their church members of Revelations 2-3 to repent from their sinful ways (2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19) else He would chastise them. Likewise, God predicted

the future unrepentant behavior of Tribulation earth dwellers (Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11) and the corresponding punishments. This latter group refused to repent so they deserved the punishment in the lake of fire.

Whoever teaches or preaches that repentance is not necessary for salvation is guilty of heresy. If repentance is neglected in the course of witnessing, regardless of the prospect's "acceptance of Christ", he remains unconverted. Hence, even if they are immersed in water they can't change from a sinful lifestyle into godliness as they are still spiritually dead. These unconverted folks who populate our church pews certainly will bring in false teachings and heretical practices into the local assembly. Thus, the purity of the Lord's assembly is compromised at the altar of statistical pragmatism.

We who name the Lord must discard such error of neglecting or undermining repentance in our witnessing works. We are never to employ such fleshly machination for the sake of filling the church pews with warm people expecting later that they would be converted. We are to rely upon the Holy Spirit to bring conviction as we diligently preach the pure words of God. Let us imitate biblical examples, not the successful Baptist preachers who sold out a portion of God's word to pragmatism. May we be like Apostle Peter at Caesarea (Acts 10:44-45)! Amen. ***

Walang Pangalawang Pagkakataon

Chirmen L. Raquintan

"Kuha mo?"

Karamihan sa inyong mga bata'y alam na alam o kabisadong-kabisado itong linyang ito. Marahil isa kayo sa mga mahilig sumubaybay sa teleseryeng pinagmulan ng linyang ito. Sa teleseryeng ito, pinapakitang ang taong namatay ay pwede pang bigyan ng isang pagkakataon para siya'y makapasok sa langit. Ang bida dito'y isang dating mayamang babaeng naging masama sa pakikitungo sa kanyang kapwa noong siya'y nabubuhay pa. Kaya nang siya'y namatay, hindi siya agad nakapasok sa langit kundi humingi siya nang isa pang pagkakataon para maitama ang kanyang mga pagkakamaling nagawa sa kapwa. Siya'y pinayagang makabalik sa lupa at binigyan ng isang daang araw para itama ang mga nagawang pagkakamali.

Mga bata, alam ba ninyong meron ding ganitong kwento sa Bibliya sa Lucas 16:19-31? Ngunit kabaliktaran ang nangyari sa kanya. Isa siyang lalaking mayaman din. Bilang isang mayaman, ang kanyang damit ay mamahalin at siya'y namumuhay sa karangyaan araw-araw. Ngunit sa kanyang tarangkahan ay naroroon ang isang lalaking dukhang ang pangala'y Lazaro. Siya'y puno

ng galis sa kanyang katawan at ang mga asong lumalapit sa kanya’y dinidilaan ang kanyang mga galis. Palagiang hinahangad ni Lazaro ang mga tirang pagkain ng mayamang lalaki para siya’y mabusog. At nang namatay si Lazaro, siya’y dinala ng mga anghel ng Diyos sa piling ni Abraham sa langit. Pagkatapos ng pagkamatay ni Lazaro’y namatay din yung mayamang lalaki at siya’y inilibing. Ngunit siya’y napunta sa impiyerno na kung saan siya’y nagdusa sa lagablab ng apoy. Dahil sa hirap na dinaranas, hiniling ng mayamang lalaki kay Abraham na suguin si Lazaro para bigyan ng babala ang kanyang mga kapatid na lalaki at nang huwag nang mapunta sa lugar na kanyang kinaroroonan. Subalit hindi pinagbigyan ni Abraham ang kanyang kahilingan sapagkat ayon kay Abraham, sapat ang mga itinuro ng mga propeta at ni Moses na nasusulat sa matandang tipan upang malaman nila ang daan patungong langit.

Malinaw ang katotohanang itinuturo sa aklat ni Lukas—ang taong namatay ay dalawa lamang ang maaaring patutunguhan—langit o impiyerno. ***Walang pangalawang pagkakataon na binibigay ang Diyos na mapunta sa langit ang isang taong namatay na at patungong impiyerno. Ito’y sapagkat ang kaligtasan ay sa biyaya ng Diyos at hindi sa pamamagitan ng mabuting gawa sa kapwa (Gal. 2:16, Tito 3:5-7). Matatangap mo ang kaligtasan kapag ikaw ay nagsisi sa iyong mga kasalanan at sumampalataya ka kay Kristo bilang iyong Tagapagligtas.*** Ginawa ito ni Lazaro kaya nang siya’y namatay, siya’y pumunta sa langit. Hindi ito ginawa ng mayamang lalaki kaya siya’y napunta sa impiyerno. At mga bata, tandaan ninyong mali ang itinuturo ng teleseryeng maaaring bumalik sa lupa ang isang taong patay na at itama ang maling ginawa upang umiwas sa impiyerno at mapunta ng langit. Ang pagkakataong maligtas, sa pamamagitan ng pagsisisi sa kasalanan at pananampalataya kay Kristo, ay ibinibigay sa mga buhay lamang (Hebreo 9:27).

Kayo mga bata, alam na ba ninyo kung paano maligtas? Marahil madalas na ninyo itong naririnig sa inyong guro tuwing Linggo at sigurado akong kabisado na ninyo ang mga dapat gawin para ang isang taong tulad ninyo ay maligtas. Ngunit ginawa na ba ninyo ang mga ito – magsisi sa mga kasalanan, manampalataya’t tanggapin si Kristo bilang tanging Tagapagligtas? Ilang beses mo ba itong dapat gawin? Tama, minsan lang sa iyong buhay at kung ito’y totoo sa iyong puso, ikaw ay patungo na sa langit simula sa araw na tinanggap mo si Kristo bilang iyong Tagapagligtas! Kaya sabi minsan ng isang batang dumadalo sa klase pag-linggo sa gawain sa Bacong, “Just do it!” Gawin mo na ngayon na walang pag-aalinlangan! Ang kaligtasan ay ang pinakamaganda at pinaka-importanteng regalo ni Kristo sa iyo sapagkat buhay Niya ang naging kapalit nito. Amen! ***

Total Depravity of Man is False

1 John 5:1

Pastor Jed B. Raquintan

Calvinism is on again among independent Baptists. It is gradually gaining ground among local churches. Both the evangelical and fundamental churches are not spared. Some of its tenets just provide intellectual answers to the growing apostasy. The young generation of preachers find this theological system palatable to the fallen scholarly minds. It also satisfies the pursuit of this generation for high academic scholarship. Modern day teachers and preachers love this theologian for his high lasting intellectual pursuits in the Bible. They look at him as their fellows highly regard him. But, lo, they are overlooking the dark spots of this reformation giant. They even glossed over his questionable conversion experience.

John Calvin in his academic days pursued the Romanist belief and also had some dose of law studies from humanist perspective. He became popular as he wrote his greatest creation—the Institutes of Christian Religion. In it he presented his theological beliefs, one of them is *the total depravity of man*. That man is unable to come to Christ and to believe in Him for salvation unless God has already enabled him. This is also called *pre-conversion quickening*. He rejected the clear teaching of Scriptures that God invites sinners to come to Christ and believe in Him for regeneration.

More than this, Calvin was publicly known for persecuting even suggesting the harshest punishment of death by drowning those who denied, rejected, and or opposed his Calvinistic beliefs and teachings. Being in power, highly respected and sought by State authorities, he would recommend banishment or death to anyone in Geneva that ran against his Calvinist beliefs. He was not free from persecuting those who disagreed with him. He used State resources to stop what he branded as heretical to Calvinism. He did not believe in separation of church and state. He harbored theological hatred to his theological critics or deviants.

This short treatise is not meant to address the entire issues in this doctrinal heresy—*man's inability to come to Christ for salvation*. Rather this is a glimpse to explore the written revelation of God for exhaustive answers refuting the attendant errors of this Calvinistic teaching. A believer must free himself from humanist theological system that runs through his mind as he understands the written Scriptures. He must rather let the Scriptures speak for themselves. This is the Biblicist framework.

First, anyone can believe in Christ as the Messiah. This is what the word “whosoever” means. Anyone without qualification except “believing” in Christ as the Messiah is taught. But Calvinism has infused in some Scriptures that prior to believing God has already enabled the sinner. But that is not stated in this text. Further, this text is also taught in other Johannine

passages such as those in John 3:15-18, 36. Likewise, in John 5:24 he clearly stated the only precedent to believing is hearing God's written revelation. When this occurs then God declares the one who is hearing God's words and believing in Christ as receiving eternal life! Hence, regardless of the intensity of man's sin everyone is able to come to and believe in Christ.

Second, such person has been birthed by God upon believing in Christ. The phrase *is born of God* means God has regenerated (made him born again) the person upon believing in Christ. Note that the time of his regeneration is not prior to his belief or that he has been enabled to believe but at the same time he believed! More so this regenerating work of God has a continual effect upon him. The total inability of man as claimed by Calvinism has no room in this portion of Scriptures. This teaching is also corroborated by Christ Himself in his encounter with Nicodemus at John 3:3, 5, and 7.

Third, John warned about receiving man's witness in 1 John 5:9. Man's theological treatise and explanation may appear so right but God's biblical revelation when soundly compared is superior to the former. So where do we go for theological basis? Should we follow what Calvin has taught? Or must we subscribe to his modern followers' revision of their founding teachings? Should we not go by the written words of God? God has answered it in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

Fourth, man is commanded to come to Christ. In Matthew 9:6, the Lord has forgiven the palsy from his sins. For this the Messiah was heavily criticized. Yet, He taught the disciples that this palsy was able to come to Christ. How do we know this? Consider the two imperative verbs (commands *take up thy bed and go*) Christ employed. As commands, these two actions must be accomplished by the palsy. No one could do this for him. Only he himself can do this and he must do it (to bring his bed up and go elsewhere). Further, Christ did the same in the case of Matthew as a former publican in verse 9. This publican was commanded to follow Christ. He must do it as no one can do it for him. Prerequisite to this following of Christ is repentance from sins (see verse 13). Repentance is entirely man's duty to turn around from a life of sin to righteousness after having seen the wickedness.

Finally, faith in Christ or in His word is the divine designation by which salvation is received. Faith is not necessarily good works. It is not also the Savior. It is not the price of salvation. Rather, it is just God's designation by which man could receive the gift of salvation. This is seen in Luke 18:42. Clearly, Scriptures are full of this evidence that man must trust upon Christ or believe in Him for salvation. Likewise, Paul taught the Ephesian church members about this agency of receiving salvation in Ephesians 2:8-9.

As we expectantly wait for the Savior's return, we can expect increasing apostasy. And such is extremely dangerous as Paul said in 2 Timothy 3:1ff. Churches who reject the entire revelation will succumb to various errors both in doctrine and in practice. Hence, we need to heed Pauline inspired counsel in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 so we may be freed from ruinous damage of false teaching and practice. Amen! ***

Some Marks of True Salvation as Revealed by John 1 John 1:1-10

Pastor Jed B. Raquintan

How does one know s/he is truly saved or converted in Christ? Can this inward spiritual and personal salvation be seen outwardly? If so, how do we measure the genuineness of one's conversion? In our day of easy believism and fast acceptance of Christ without repentance, we see the professed ones still walking in the darkness of old sinful ways.

Apostle John extensively discussed these marks in his first epistle. Some of the words or phrases he used in this epistle which signify this eternal salvation are the following: believe, know, and hath life. This is now my concern in this article. However, I will discuss only a little of the entire epistle for lack of space and concern about the span of interest among our readers. From chapter one, we can glean the following evidential truths of genuine salvation.

First, the saved will fellowship with God (all three persons). One can see this truth in verse 3 and 6a. Prior to salvation as unsaved, we enjoy fellowship with sinful ways and with sinful people. However, salvation has changed these into a desire to fellowship with God through His written word. Then we want to be with God's people who also want the words of God. We associate with these people around God's truth. We sever from those who selectively obey God's words. We separate from those who reject God's written words not in its entirety but even in some portions only. Therefore, a truly saved person will look for a church where s/he could fellowship with by membership without disobeying or sacrificing God's words. Every truly converted one will disassociate from error and long for companionship of those with whom he agrees in belief and behavior.

Second, the saved ceases to conduct life according to the ways of darkness. Look at verse 6b-7. Prior to our conversion we lived as the world, the sinful flesh, and the devil dictates us. We have no God residing in us who convicts us of sin. He urges us now to live according to light and righteousness. As God our Father is light the saved too must walk in it (v. 5b). If we claim to be saved and still live in sinful ways then we are lying and fooling ourselves. We are not truly saved or converted!

Third, the saved affirms the presence and possession of sinful nature. Consider verses 8 and 10. Prior to and after conversion man still possess a sinful nature. The truly saved will grow in holiness and decrease in sinfulness. However, some teach that once you get saved you will cease from sinning or you become sinless. This is heretical as Paul in his latter part of life still faced this struggle in Romans 7:15-25. The saved realizes also his sinful condition that apart from God there is no salvation in him.

Fourth, the saved relies upon the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. Note verses 7b and 9. Only the perfect blood of Christ not for its quantity but for its efficacy could continually purify the saved from sins. He has been delivered from sins' penalty and God keeps him clean from further sins.

What a great privilege for the truly saved! The saved does not count on his good works for his sins to be purified but on the power of the blood of Christ!

Finally, the saved possesses God's truth. This we see in verses 8b and 10b. Since God has revealed His word to us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27) then the believer has been exposed to God's truth. All he needs to do is to receive them by faith like the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:13). A believer may have error but he needs to outgrow it with the words of God. This also depicts what the unsaved possesses – untruths and lies! Amen! ***

Si Hannah at si Samuel

Eden R. Raquintan

Sa Bibliya, isa si Hannah sa mga kilalang inang ginamit ng Diyos upang ihanda ang kanyang anak na si Samuel sa masasabi nating habambuhay na paglilingkod sa Panginoon. Nasa sinapupunan pa lamang ang kanyang anak ay inihanda na ito ni Hannah pagkat ang bata ay ipinangako na niyang iaalay sa Panginoon. Nang dumating ang takdang panahong si Samuel ay dinala na sa templo, walang paga-aatubiling ibinigay ng ina ang kanyang nag-iisang anak sa pangangalaga ng sacerdoteng si Eli. Minsan na lamang sa isang taon sila nagkikita sa tuwing pupunta sa templo ang mag-asawang Elkanah at Hannah upang dalhin ang kanilang alay.

Si Jochebed na ina ni Moses ay isa rin huwaring inang tinuruan ang kanyang anak tungkol sa pag-ibig sa Diyos at sa paglilingkod sa Kanya. Kahit na ang sanggol na si Moses ay inaring anak na ng prinsesa ng Ehipto, sa probidensiya ng Diyos siya'y inalagaan at pinalaki pa rin ng tunay niyang ina. Dahil dito'y nalaman niya ang kanyang tunay na pagkatao at nakilala niya ang Diyos ng kanyang mga magulang. Sa kanyang paglaki'y nanirahan siya sa palasyo ng paraon ng Ehipto ngunit hindi niya nalimutan ang mga naitanim na aral ng kanyang ina kaya't siya'y ginamit ng Diyos upang muling makabalik sa Lupang Pangako sa mga Israelita.

Ang mag-inang Lois at Eunice, lola at ina ni Timoteo, ang siyang naging daan upang maturuan ang batang lalaki tungkol kay Jehovah. Marahil sila rin mismo ang naging instrumento upang ang huli'y makakilala kay Kristo bilang kanyang Tagapagligtas at maihanda siya sa paglilingkod dito. Kaya nga nang makilala ni Apostol Pablo si Timoteo sa kanyang ikalawang paglalakbay bilang misyunero, ito'y hinog na upang maging isa sa kanyang mga kabalikat sa gawain. Kalaunan si Timoteo ay naging pastor ng isa sa malalaking iglesia ng kanilang kapanahunan, ang iglesia sa Efeso.

Isa sa mga ipinanalangin ng ating iglesia ay ang magkaroon pa ng maraming mga Samuel

Preach Repentance!

Lest G. Raquintan

I was only 11 years old when I got saved. I can still remember up to now the content of my prayer then. It was about repentance of my sins to God and faith in my only Saviour—the Lord Jesus Christ. Since then, I had the assurance of eternal life and I never doubted my salvation. But after 16 years, I realized my error in witnessing to the unsaved. Before, I would teach faith in Jesus as the requirement for salvation but I usually omit the doctrine of repentance. I highlighted the necessity of believing more than repenting from sins. When I took the Evangelism & Discipleship class in CBMS, the Lord convicted my heart to have a sound doctrine in Salvation. Through the faithful teaching of my pastor, I saw that repentance is a separate doctrine from faith and that they are equally important for a man to be saved. I was already a 3rd year Bible School student when I realized this error.

Today, there are so many young people who have been Christians for several years already, but are still weak when it comes to witnessing. They are aware of the Lord's mandate based on Matthew 28:19-20 but they are not faithfully practicing it. Furthermore, many young people are not practicing because they do not know exactly what they will teach to the unsaved. Young person, it is important that you have a sound understanding about salvation so you can have a sound practice in witnessing the gospel to the lost.

One reason why Baptists fail to have a sound Soteriology or the study of salvation is the lack of diligent study of the Word. Dr. D. Cloud said, “The Bible very plainly gives us a doctrine of repentance, but there seems to be some confusion among Independent Baptists in this regard.”¹ For a witness to have omitted the need for repentance unto salvation is a mark of ignorance of biblical texts that support this very doctrine. John the Baptist preached repentance of sin (Mat. 3:2). Jesus Christ preached the same message (Mat. 4:17). The twelve disciples preached that men should repent (Mar. 6:12). The apostle Peter preached repentance (Acts 2:38, 3:19). The apostle Paul preached repentance as well (Acts 26:20). Therefore, we who claim to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, and the apostles must preach the same message. We must preach repentance!

Another error seen among Baptists is the belief that repentance is inherent to faith and so it does not have to be preached.² Repentance and faith are two different words and actions. Paul even made the distinction between the two in Acts 20:21. He testified both to the Jews and to the Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. So these two words require different responses from a person but they are connected and they are both necessary for a man to be saved. So how can a witness not teach repentance when it is primarily commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, and the apostles in their preachings? When witnessing, we must teach repentance as well as faith. No one will be saved with a gospel that is incomplete or erroneous. ***

¹ <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/46ad7d0b5871ba6de9c94a1c26a0517f-551.html>

² <http://www.wayoflife.org/files/46ad7d0b5871ba6de9c94a1c26a0517f-551.html>

Ang Wakas ng Pagkakataong Maligtas

Linda N. Veracruz

“Itinakda na minsan lamang mamatay ang tao at pagkatapos nito ay ang kahatulan.” Hebreo 9:27

Sa ano mang kumpetisyon, importanteng ang manlalaro’y nasa magandang kundisyon at nakatuon sa kanyang dapat gawin upang maging matagumpay at makuha ang gantimpala. Kasama nito ang prebilihiyo na makilala at makapag-bigay ng karangalan sa pangalan ng bansa, kumpanya o grupong dinadala. Walang indibidwal na nagnais na matalo ano man ang paligsahang kanyang sinalihan. Ano mang propesyon ang pinasok ng isang tao, nais niyang siya’y maging matagumpay. Subalit hindi lahat ng nangyayari sa tao’y yung gusto mo lamang mangyari. Isipin mo na lamang ang pagkadismayang iyong mararamdaman kung matalo ka sa isang kumpetisyon dahil sa hindi mo nagawa ng tama ang iyong ginagawa. Marahil ay naagaw ang iyong atensyon ng sitwasyong hindi mo kontrolado. Ano man ang dahilan, nais mong sana’y maaari mong ulitin ang iyong laro upang maitama ito, pero wala nang pangalawang pagkakataon. Ano man ang desisyon ng mga hurado’y siyang masusunod. Nawala ka sa kumpetisyon at kasama ring nawala ang ano mang premyong kalakip ng pagkapanalo, maging ang karangalang nais mo.

May pagkakahawig ang pagkatalo sa kumpetisyon at pagkatalo sa buhay.

Sabi sa Salita ng Diyos, binigyan Niya ang tao ng isang buhay lamang. Kaya dapat na mabuhay hindi ayon sa kung ano ang gusto mo, kundi ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos. Hindi ito dapat sayangin, dapat tayong mamuhay tulad ng isang manlalakbay lamang dito sa mundo (1 Ped. 2:11-12). Dahil sa pagsapit ng takdang araw ng kamatayan, wala ng pangalawang pagkakataon, ito na ang oras ng paghuhusga ng Diyos sa tao. Tapos na ang pagbibigay sa iyo ng pagkakataon upang kilalanin Siya bilang Tagapagligtas. Tapos na rin ang pagkakataon para sundin ang Kanyang mga ipinag-uutos. Tapos na rin ang pagkakataon para tanggapin ang Kanyang Salita. Walang dahilan, katuwiran, paliwanag ang katanggap-tanggap sa harap ng Hukom. Ang kamataya’y hindi maiiwasan. Ang bawat isa’y may takdang oras at walang nakababatid kung kailan ito darating. Ang buhay ay maikli lamang, “...ito ay tulad sa isang singaw na sa maikling oras ay lumilitaw at pagkatapos ay naglalaho (Sant. 4:14). Isang buhay, isang kamatayan. Handa ka na bang harapin ang kamatayan? Sigurado ka na ba sa iyong patutunguhan? Handa ka na ba sa ihahatol ng Hukom?”

Sa mga na kay Kristo, ang kamataya’y walang kapangyarihan sapagkat ito’y napagtagumpayan na dahil kay Kristo. Sila na lumalakad ayon sa Espiritu, sila na na kay Kristo Jesus ay wala ng kahatulan (Roma 8:1). Pero para sa mga tumanggi kay Kristo at hindi kumilala sa Kanya, nasa kanila ang lahat ng dahilan para matakot (Juan 5:28-29; Mateo 25:31-46). Darating ang kamatayan. Huwag natin itong ipagsawalang bahala. Maiksi lamang ang buhay at ang kamatayan ang wakas ng pagkakataong maligtas.

Kapatid, huwag nating sayangin ang buhay at oras para sa sarili lamang. Marami pa ang naghihintay na maabutan ng balita ng kaligtasan. Naibalita mo na ba sa kanila? Binigyan tayo ng pagkakataong marinig ito, tinanggap natin at tayo’y naligtas. Ibigay din natin sa kanila ang pagkakataon dahil sa takdang oras walang ikalawang pagkakataon. ***

na matuturuan at huhubugin ng ating Pastor. Layon nitong sa hinaharap ay magamit ang mga naturuan upang makapagtanim ng mga iglesiang tulad natin sa iba't-ibang dako ng bansa at ng mundo. Subalit hindi matutupad ang ganitong pangitain kung walang mga Samuel na mag-aalay ng kanilang buhay sa paglilingkod sa Diyos. At dito'y may magagampanan tayong mga inang mahalagang papel upang sila'y maihanda sa paglilingkod. Ang patuloy na pagtuturo sa ating mga anak ng Salita ng Diyos at ang masigasig na pagdala sa kanila sa simbahan upang makapakinig ng mga aral ng Bibliya ay malaking bagay upang malaman nila ang kalooban ng Panginoon sa kanilang buhay. Ang ating mga panalangin para sa kanila at ang pagsuporta sa kanila kung sakaling nais nilang maglilingkod sa Diyos ay mahalaga rin.

Noong Hunyo lamang ay nagkaroon tayo ng bagong Samuel. Bagama't malungkot, sapagkat ito ang unang pagkakataong nawalay ang anak sa kanya nang matagal, buong pusong ipinagkatiwala ni Hannah ang kanyang anak sa ating Pastor. Noong nakaraang Setyembre ay nagkaroon ng pagkakataong madalaw ni Hannah si Samuel kasabay ng pagdalo sa *Apologetic Conference*. Ilang linggo pa bago ang araw na iyon ay nakikita ko na ang pananabik ng mag-ina sa isa't-isa. Tulad ng mga batang nagbibilang kung ilang araw na lang ay Pasko na dahil sa pananabik na makatanggap ng regalo, ganun din marahil ang nadama ni Samuel. Kaya nga't panay ang tukso ko sa kanya tungkol dito. Binibiro ko pa siyang malamang ay sasama na siya sa ina pag-uwi nito. Subalit nangingiti lamang siya at sinasabing, "*Hindi po. Dito po ako't mag-aaral ng Bible.*"

Naiisip ko rin ang kapanabikan ng batang si Samuel sa Bibliya—kung papaanong siya'y nananabik sa taunang pagpunta ni Hannah. Ganun din ang paghahangad ng inang makita ang anak at ito'y mayakap at makausap nang matagal-tagal na panahon. At pagkatapos ng kanilang paghahandog sa templo'y muli na namang iiwan si Samuel at muling mananabik para sa susunod na taong pagkikita. Ngunit ito'y kanilang tiniis dahil mas mahalaga para sa kanila ang pagtupad sa pangako at ang pagbibigay ng buhay sa Diyos na tumawag kay Samuel upang Siya'y paglilingkuran.

Nais ko ring magkaroon ng Samuel o *Samuela*. Subalit hindi ko maaaring ipilit ang gusto ko sa aking mga anak. Diyos lamang ang tatawag sa kanila sa anumang uri ng paglilingkod na nais Niya. Ang tanging magagawa ko'y gabayan at ihanda sila sa kanilang paglilingkod. Bilang mga anak ng lingkod ng Diyos, sila'y maraming beses nang nakaranas ng kabutihan at pagpapala ng Panginoon bunga ng pagsunod sa Kanyang kalooban. Higit pa sa mga inaasahan ang kanilang natamong biyaya dahil sa pagtugon ng kanilang magulang. Sana'y maging hamon din sa kanila ang katotohanang hindi maaaring magkulang ang ating mapagpalang Diyos sa mga tinawag niyang nagpapatuloy sa kanilang masigasig na paglilingkod. ***



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